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NUMBER 22

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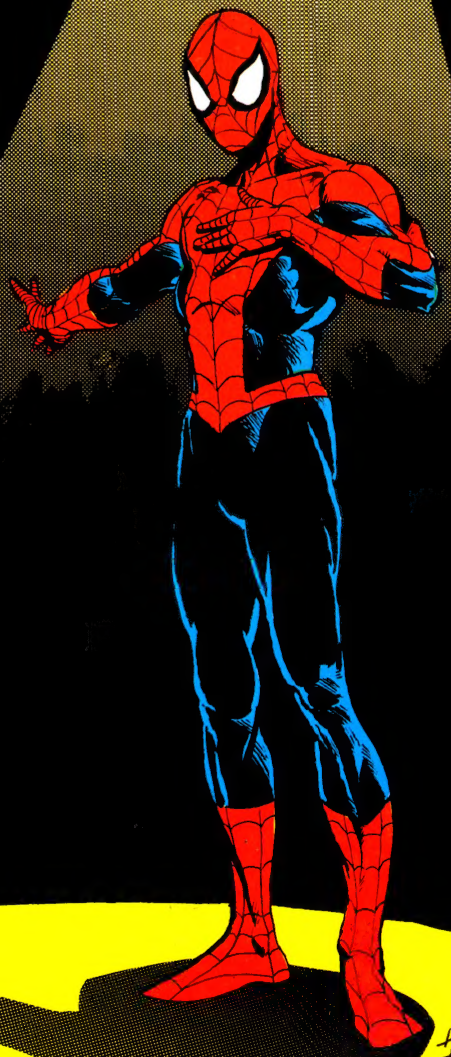

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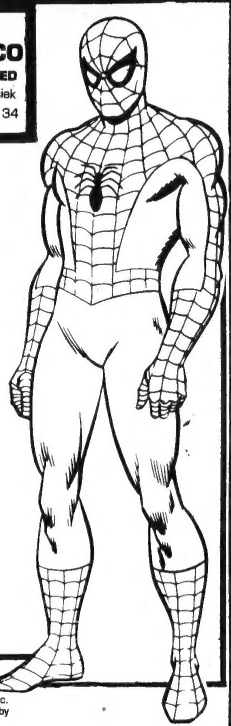

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Comic Features is published monthly by New Media Publishing, Inc. 1518 E. Fowler Ave. Tampa, FL 33612. Distributed in England by Titan Distributers Ltd. P.O. Box 250 London E3 4RT.

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FEATURE NEWS

The DC EXPLOSION

Following in the footsteps of Marvel Comics, DC also hopes to expand their production in 1983. DC will enter the field of graphic novels, produce several mini- and maxi-series and launch at least three new titles. The last time DC planned this scale of expansion was immediately prior to the "Great DC Implosion".

DC now plans to launch mini-series featuring Deadman, Atom, Justice League of America, and Green Arrow. An unspecified series entitled **Thriller** and a new mini-series by Joe Kubert are also planned. Both the **Green Arrow** and **Thriller** books will be by Mike Barr and Trevor Von Eeden. The **Deadman** book will be by Mishkin and Cohn, with Infantino handling the art chores.

Three maxi-series are planned. Two are already well known, these being the **History of the DC Universe** and **Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld**. The third will feature a new character designed by George Perez, and will be written and drawn by Marv Wolfman and Keith Pollard. The Vigilante will be introduced in **Teen Titans Annual #2** and will then receive his own maxi-series. According to Wolfman, this will be a **very** violent book.

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Three new monthly titles will also be added to the schedule. These will be **The Outsiders**, the new Mike Barr/Jim Aparo team featuring Batman, Frank Miller's **Ronin**, and an unspecified superhero title.

The Outsiders team will be composed of Batman, Metamorpho, Black Lightning, and three new characters: Halo, Katana, and Geo Force, the brother of the Teen Titan Terra. **Ronin** will be a six issue series released every six weeks.

Two Marvel/DC team-ups are planned for 1983. One will be a **JLA/Avengers** meeting, for summer release. The other will be the second **X-Men/Teen Titans** teaming, this one created by Marv Wolfman and George Perez. Wolfman has said that their only problem is finding a major X-Men villain.

A final crossover special book will take place within the DC Universe. The Teen Titans are due to meet the Legion of Superheroes, thus gathering more youthful superheroes between two covers than has ever before been seen in comics. The plans are to have Paul Levitz and Keith Giffen handle the Legion segments while Marv Wolfman and George Perez deal with the Titans. If Perez's schedule prohibits his participation, then Giffen will handle the entire art chores.

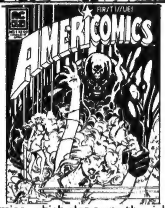
The **Atom** mini-series will be written by Jan Strnad and drawn by Gil Kane. While Kane has long been associated with the character, Strnad is best known for his work with Richard Corben.

The **Blue Devil**, a new book by Mishkin, Cohn, and newcomer Paris Cullins, is also on DC's schedule. Three other new titles are **Zero Man** by Len Wein and Gil Kane, **Jonni Thunder**, a female detective based out of Los Angeles and created by Roy Thomas and Ernie Colon, and **Atari Force** by Gerry Conway and Jose Garcia-Lopez. **Atari Force** and **Zero Man** will be regular monthly titles while the other two are mini-series planned for limited release.

CHARLTON, DC COMICS, AND AMERICOMICS PLAY MUSICAL CHAIRS

Charlton Comics, which recently terminated its line of comics, had turned the rights to utilize its characters over to Bill Black's Americomics group. Black was scheduled to assume the material already created for the **Charlton Bullseye** book for publication in its own showcase title, **Americomics**. Black was also to have created additional material involving these characters. All of this has changed.

In an unexpected move Charlton withdrew the right to utilize the characters in additional stories and announced that it had entered negotiations with DC Comics for the rights to these characters. DC



Comics, which also owns the rights to the characters of such other previously-existing publishers as Quality Comics and Fawcett Comics, will probably be the owner of these characters by the time that this sees print. This arrangement will involve such characters as the Blue Beetle, Captain Atom, Nightshade, Thunderbolt, the Peacemaker, and others. Unconfirmed rumor has it that at least some of these characters will either be joining the Justice League of America or Batman's Outsiders group and that the possibility exists for at least one of these characters to receive his or her own title.

Bill Black will be permitted to use all existing material but no new material may be created.

GENE DAY'S CONTROVERSIAL LEGACY

News Analysis by Hal Schuster

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. And so it seems to go in comics these days. Coupled with the rapid expansion of comic book specialty shops, a massive increase in the sales of new comics and comic-related publications, and the launching of a multitude of new comic companies and projects by the existing companies we have seen several months of fiery conflict, raging contradictions, and angry denials. We have also seen the deaths of some of the greatest creators to ever grace the pages of a comic book or comic strip story.

In a year that has already seen the deaths of such men as Hal Foster, Warren Tufts, Noel Sickles, Russ Manning, Reed Crandall, and Ernie Bushmiller it seems that we have almost become numb. The death of still another human being and creative genius somehow doesn't carry the sting that it would have even a few months ago. Our emotions have become calloused from constant pain.

And now the death of another artist has combined the worst elements of this year as it comes bearing a howling storm of controversy and accusation. Gene Day has only been with us a very short time and yet he had developed a very distinctive style and produced works of art that would have done a veteran of many years proud. Perhaps we will never know what heights he could have reached had he lived to explore his craft and test his limits.

The most tragic aspect of his quiet death, his passing in his sleep from a weak heart, is the mantle of despair that has been thrust upon him by the men who state that his life ended in tragedy, as a failure in his chosen craft, in despondency created by the rejection of his work by both his Editor-In-Chief, Jim Shooter, and the company that published his professional work, Marvel Comics. Some go so far as to lay the blame for his heart attack at the feet of Shooter. Others, such as Doug Moench, have said that he was preparing to launch upon a new career at DC Comics.

According to Marvel Comics this simply wasn't the case. Gene Day worked as an artist for Marvel up to and including the day that he died. In fact he was the regular penciller on two of Marvel's top-selling titles, **Star Wars** and **Indiana Jones**. While he had just left the position as artist on **Master of Kung Fu**, a title which has since been cancelled and was at that time one of the lowest selling of the company's books, this was his decision. According to Carol Kalish, Marvel's Manager of Direct Sales, when Doug Moench [writer on **Master of Kung Fu**] left the title "Gene Day decided that he too would leave. Since Doug was leaving and would be replaced by a new writer the book would change direction and he did not want to work on the book if Doug left. It was his personal decision to leave **Master of Kung Fu**. He never was actually removed. Jim never fired him. The editor never fired him." While it is true that there was a certain amount of incompatability between the artstyle which Day used on the book and Shooter's own belief of what would cause the title to sell and this did lead to some discussion between the two it did not lead to Shooter firing him from the title.

It was at this time that Louise Jones offered Day the job of pencilling both of the licensed titles. With the new royalty program, which pays a book's creative team a premium for each copy sold over 100,000 copies, this would have the effect of massively increasing Day's income. **Master of Kung Fu**, a marginal title, only paid a royalty of $20 per month to Day while **Star Wars** alone would have paid him $1200 per month. While it is known that Doug Moench was encouraging Day to leave Marvel for the greener pastures of DC and that Day had indeed conducted negotiations with employees of DC he never informed anyone at Marvel that he would be leaving. According to Kalish, "Gene would have had the courtesy to call Louise Jones and tell her. His abrupt leaving would have caused problems on this book [**Star Wars**] which always works with a tight deadline. He left **Master of Kung Fu** under his own power and almost immediately after that was offered two books by Louise. Everyone thought it was settled."

Kalish went on to say that "the discussion that Gene had left Marvel to sign an exclusive contract with DC comes solely from Moench... after Gene cannot say otherwise." This leaves still another mystery involving Doug Moench and the powers-that-be at Marvel Comics, a mystery that will probably never be cleared up. For, as Carol Kalish clearly notes, Gene Day is not available to tell his own story.

THE STRANGEST NEW MARVEL TITLE OF ALL

The Mysterions may be the strangest new Marvel title ever. Although this book bears the same name as the already announced Marvel Graphic Novel being produced by Dave Cockrum there is no connection between this new title, to be released initially as a bimonthly, and the Novel. In fact Cockrum's book has been retitled **The Futurions** to avoid confusion.

This new series is based on a toy produced by Knickerbocker Toys. The heroes of the book will be based upon the geometric shape of the toys of the same name. The metallic toys have the ability to unfold into figures. Knickerbocker Toys has commissioned Marvel Entertainment to produce an animated special also based on the toys and has agreed to have all related licensing handled through Marvel.

All of this is a slightly outre concept but it is not the characters that make this book so unusual. Rather it is the fact that Knickerbocker Toys is a wholly owned subsidiary of Warner Communications. Warner Communications, of course, is the parent company of DC Comics.

The report last issue that Marvel would be printing one issue of Spider-man backwards, to be read with the aid of a Spidey-mirror was a hoax. No such book was produced or is planned to be produced.

AFTER ALL SHE'S BEEN THROUGH WITH HER MARVEL COMPETITION THESE PAST FEW WEEKS--
--NOW THIS!
IF ANYTHING'S HAPPENED TO HER I'LL--
WAIT! THIS IS SEVERAL FLOORS ABOVE THE WARPS ZONE LIKE SOME KIND OF STORAGE AREA.
BLAST SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN PRETTY WELL CONTAINED...NOT NEARLY SO BAD AS IT LOOKED.
SO WHY IS MY SPIDER-SENSE ACTING UP LIKE CRAZY--DETOO WEBS HE SHOTS--DEATH NEARS?
IT BETTER GO IN... MAKE SURE NO ONE'S TRAPPED AND THAT THE FIRE ISN'T SPREADING!
MAYBE I'LL FINALLY GET TO DO SOME THING THAT WILL SAVE AUNT MAY
OR CHRISTINE IT!
FOR AN INSTANT BEFORE HE LEAPS INTO INTERIOR DIRTY--MAY IS SILHOUETTED IN THE BLOWN OUT OPENING THAT WAS ONCE A WINDOW
AND IN THAT INSTANT...

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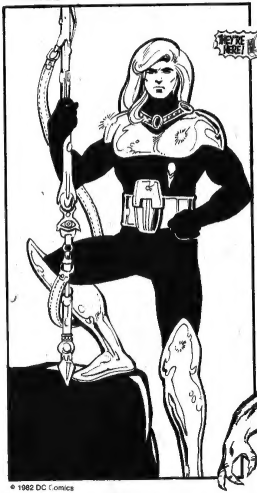
PRIMUS



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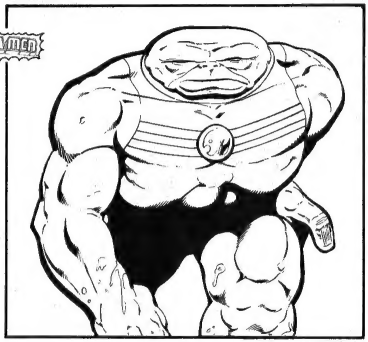

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TIGORR

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KALISTA

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NIMBUS

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PRIMUS:
The psionic leader of The Omega Men, Primus wears the mantle of command in their desperate struggle to free the Vegan solar system.

KALISTA:
Wife to Primus and exiled ruler of the planet Euphorix, her sorcerous powers are feared even by the Citadel.

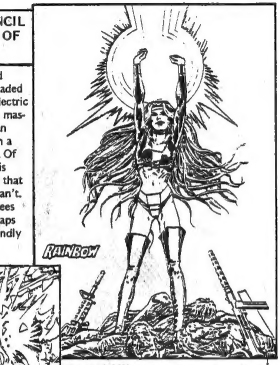
TIGORR:
Former military commander of his homeworld who vies with Primus for leadership of The Omega Men.

NIMBUS:
Former diplomat whose misty form is capable of bringing death to those seeking destruction of The Omega Men.

BROOT:
The mightiest of The Omega Men, and perhaps the most tragic of their number. He fights to avenge the murder of his infant son at the hands of the Citadel.

WILL MEUGNIOT'S PENCIL CHARACTER DESIGNS OF THE DNAgents

SURGE is the self-appointed leader of the group — a hot-headed adventurer whose spirit is as electric as his body. He's charged with massive doses of energy that he can expend at will to blast through a wall, or give an attacker a jolt. Of all the DNAgents, only Surge is truly enraptured with the fact that they can do what "humans" can't. He's likeable, but sometimes sees no reason to look before he leaps and, so, can lead the group blindly into peril.

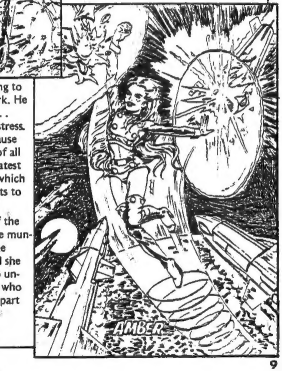


RAINBOW represents the calmer head. Lovely and lithe, she is possessed of incredible acrobatic abilities, her D.N.A. having been programmed for maximum agility and balance. She also projects mental images into her opponents' brains. Sometimes, her images are bold and sudden, striking abrupt terror into an enemy. And her mental abilities transcend even this: No one is certain just how much of her mind she will eventually harness and for what purpose.

SHAM was conceived as a special infiltrator, gifted with the power to emulate anyone in both looks and voice. The power, wonderful though it may be, has left him with a severe identity crisis. All he is, he thinks, is an amalgam of everything around him — an utterly artifical creation. Because of this, he is convinced that he is of little value to his teammates because he, to his own mind, doesn't really exist.

TANK was made extra-strong to do the company's muscle-work. He has the strength of ten men . . . twenty, in times of extreme stress. Don't take him for slow, because he's not. He's a thinker, and of all the DNAgents, he has the greatest curiosity about the world in which they find themselves. He wants to be one of the "real humans."

AMBER is the free spirit of the band. She is unfettered by the mundane facts of gravity. She's the wild-eyed innocent in a world she hasn't been in long enough to understand. She's the DNAgent who struggles hardest, not to be a part of the world, but, at least, to comprehend it.



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Don Mishkin on Amethyst, Wonder Woman, and I-Vampire

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DC is planning to premiere a new series, written by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn, the new writing team of "I...Vampire" in **House of Mystery**. Comics Feature contacted Mishkin, who is also the new writer on **Wonder Woman**, to get an insider's preview of **Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld**, as well as a look at the other two titles.

Amethyst is the story of Amy, a thirteen year-old girl who suddenly finds that she has a hidden birthright; the Gemworld. As Dan Mishkin explains: "The Gemworld is an otherworldly or other-dimensional place that can only be reached through magic. It's a girl's discovery of a secret, lost heritage that we hope is going to be really exciting, not only to her, but to a lot of readers."

Unlike most other comics, Amethyst is being designed for a predominantly female audience, although it is likely to appeal to male fans, as well. According to Mishkin, "Amethyst is going to be advertised in places...in magazines that are sold specifically to female readers. I hope that the traditional fans are going to love this, but it's different from your standard superhero. I think that there are people who may only be reading Archies, or who may not be reading comics at all, who are mostly girls before the age of fifteen, who would really enjoy Amethyst. I think that, right now, the company is a lot more interested in looking for new markets. There's going to be serious advertising."

The reason for this expanded appeal is simple. Amethyst is not just another superhero book. Rather than drew their themes from comic books, Mishkin and Cohn have gone to a different source to draw on "a combination of themes that have existed in children's literature for a long time. It comes more out of fairy tales and children's literature than out of comics. There's nothing particularly good or bad about that, it's just different."

Amethyst was originally created about five years ago by Cohn and Mishkin, who originally called the character, Changeling, "since she was somebody who was deposited as an infant, with a normal family. Of course, DC had another Changeling by the time any serious discussion got going with it, so we had to come up with another name. One day, the word Amethyst popped into my mind. I think it was really fortuitous because the idea of a gemworld, of magic based on specific gems, and using real gem lore, and then having a visual representation of a very different world was just great. It's really what pulled the whole idea together. It's what made it into a comic book, I think, as opposed to being something that could be told in any other medium."

Visually, the book benefits from the input of both writers, as well as artist Ernie Colon, who is pencilling and inking the book. It was Colon who designed the Gemworld, although with a great deal of assistance from the writers.

"It's funny. Gary [Cohn] had much more of an idea of the Gemworld showing up with lots of gems, than I did. We were calling it the Gemworld, and I was thinking that you'd call it that because the gems were the source of all the major power there. But he really had the idea of it looking like there were gems all over the place. Ernie [Colon] has been more towards my way of thinking. He's just making a weird, other-world. I think that he's going to start showing a little more gemminess to it. The look of the Gemworld is really Ernie's vision."

According to Mishkin, the characters, however, were designed with much more supervision than the world itself. "The look of the characters came with more advice from me and Gary. Gary did some sketches. He's not a great artist, although he's very good at costume design. We had some ideas that we showed to Ernie, and he took off from there. Some of the characters were right from the start. He really has a very special look. It's really different from most of the people working today. I'm more than willing to let him follow his own direction. The only character that had to be reworked was Dark Opal." Dark Opal is the villain of the book. He makes an appearance much like Basil Rathbone's version of the Sheriff of Nottingham in Robin Hood...or Claude Raines. "Ernie had him looking sort of brutish, at first. While he is an evil, villainous, in many ways savage sort, he looks like a guy who is ruling a world. He's got a kind of Darth Vader demeanor. Suave and tremendously evil, he's willing to descend into immediate depravity. He's also going to do some really bizarre things. He's going to be fairly grotesque at times. But the basic presentation of him is that kind of suave, cruel villainy."

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the book's appearance is

Colon's use of scratchboard. Scratchboard is a process in which a board is coated with a layer of ink, and white areas are brought out by scratching away the ink with a sharp stylus or needle. This results in an easily reproduced piece of art with exceptionally rich tones and subtle gradations from light to dark. Mishkin says that readers will find that, "The scratchboard makes it very special. That's a look that he was reaching for in pen and ink, at first, but he found that this really accomplished more of what he was going for. It's just wonderfully unusual and different. It's not the kind of different that calls attention to itself or stops the story. You want that sense of otherworldliness very much. Just the fact that he puts faces on everything is fun."

Dan Mishkin is also the new writer on **Wonder Woman**. This book requires a different treatment than a new title such as **Amethyst, Princess of Gemworld**. Wonder Woman is a character that needs no introduction. As the writer of the book, Mishkin has some very definite ideas on what to do and where to take the character.

"Everybody says that they are going to do the absolute, definitive WW. They kind of announce that every year. I hope that I'm going to do that, but I'm gonna do it without the brouhaha and ballyhoo. I'm just gonna start with some changes in attitude, changes in approach. I'm looking for whatever it is that has made the character last for 40 years, although there had been a lot of those years when it wasn't a very good comic book. Hopefully, I'll get those characters to the point where nobody else will decide to kill off Steve Trevor, change the setting, change her powers, take away her powers, make her a scuba-diving instructor, or whatever...Never again make her anything but Diana Prince, U.S. Airforce, Wonder Woman, with Paradise Island background, Steve Trevor as boyfriend, etc."

Mishkin also stressed that the characters and their personal lives will become a major aspect of what he has planned for the book. "The Steve Trevor relationship is really central to what I'm working on. To start with, it's really a lot of her reason to stay in man's world, so there has to be something there. Neither of them has been much of a character, really, throughout their history, and they both have to be real characters and they have to have a reason for staying together. I'm working on them in such a way that I hope that they'll end up being more like partners, more like a team. Once they're partners, you'll have a core for stories to grow out of, and you'll have less and less temptation to want to change around and muck about with the basic set-up. When Marv and I first started talking about the book, we both came up with identical analogies for what we wanted Steve and Wonder Woman's relationship to be like. What we both came up with independently was Modesty Blaise and Willie Gardner. It's intimate (not in the physical sense, in a shared experience, knowledge, and shared concerns) relationship. She's definitely the main character, but they're both adults. They both have their strengths and weaknesses. They work very well together, they're solid and they're tight, which Wonder Woman and Steve have never really been. It's been paid lip service, but it hasn't worked. The core of what I'm gonna do is the Wonder Woman/Steve relationship, making it work for the first time, I think. Stories will start coming out of that."

Mishkin also plans to delve into the mythological background of the character. He feels that he needs to "get back to the whole mythological background, I'm going to be bringing in Circe, the sorceress, who hasn't been used in Wonder Woman as far as I know, and that's a real surprise because she's the perfect foe. This has already lead to a plotline involving Bellerophon, the Greek mythological hero who was credited with capturing Pegasus and slaying the chimera.

"I went to a library and said 'let's find an interesting character from Greek mythology' that might have something to do with the Amazons. I kind of wanted Bellerophon to become some sort of major villain, but in the space that I had and the time that I had, because the book was behind schedule, it took on another shape. The character of Aegeus, who he chose as his agent, and who used

GRANCH, THIS IS SO BEAUTIFUL! THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT WHERE I COME FROM!
BUT CITRINA MADE IT SOUND AS THOUGH SHE WAS SENDING US SOMEPLACE HORRIBLE DIDN'T SHE CALL IT...
THE BOG OF ONE THOUSAND DESPAIRS, PRINCESS... AND YOU MAY BE CERTAIN IT LIVES UP TO THE NAME!
MORE THAN STEPS, I'M AFRAID!
BUT IT'S ONLY STEPS AWAY FROM SUCH BEAUTY!
THE FOREST IT'S... GONE!
SUCH... IS THE FIRST DESPAIR!
I SUPPOSE I'D BETTER CHANGE INTO SOMETHING MORE SUITED TO THIS PLACE!
CAREFUL, PRINCESS! REMEMBER CITRINA SAID TO SAVE YOUR MAGIC FOR THE DANGERS AHEAD!
THERE THEY ARE, MY LORD...

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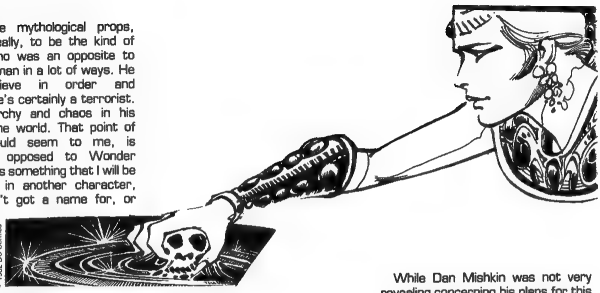
some of the mythological props, developed, really, to be the kind of character who was an opposite to Wonder Woman in a lot of ways. He doesn't believe in order and civilization. He's certainly a terrorist. There's anarchy and chaos in his outlook on the world. That point of view, it would seem to me, is diametrically opposed to Wonder Woman's. It's something that I will be returning to in another character, that I haven't got a name for, or



powers for, yet. I hope it's going to turn out to be Wonder Woman's Darth Vader of Dr. Doom. Wonder Woman has really lacked good villains."

Since the goal seems to be stabilizing the characters, the supporting cast will not undergo too many changes. There will be some development. One example is Etta Candy:

"The issue of Etta Candy going on fad diets might come up. Etta's self image problem is going to come up, partly because that character has to have something done with her."

In general, the book appears to be on a much steadier course than ever before. As Mishkin summed it up: "I've been working very hard and I'm really excited about it."

Whereas **Wonder Woman** required a stabilizing approach, "I... Vampire", the lead feature in **House of Mystery**, seems to need a new, or at least a different approach: As Mishkin describes it, "We have some big changes in store, involving just about all of the cast. I really don't want to say what they are, but they will be coming to a head very quickly. There's going to be a four-part saga that's going to change what's going on. Beyond that, I'd rather not say anything. Obviously, there's going to be people dying and things like that."

IF I'VE BEEN HOLDING BACK MY POWERS FOR ANYTHING, IT'S THIS! GOT TO REMEMBER WHAT CITRINA TAUGHT ME...FOCUS MY MYSTIC ENERGIES AND...

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While Dan Mishkin was not very revealing concerning his plans for this book, one thing that Comics Feature was able to find out was that the new writers will definitely be stressing characterization.

"It's been a very challenging book to write because Marc DeMatteis' original idea was a good one that was never really executed very well. The point of view that we're taking has less to do with the idea that he's got to kill all of these bad vampires than with his own struggle to maintain his purity and nobility. He has never taken a human life, except when he took Mary's so that she could join him as a vampire, and then, of course, she became the most evil vampire around.

We're dealing with the notion of the loss of identity and the loss of humanity involved in becoming a vampire."

While both **Wonder Woman** and "I...Vampire" have enjoyed very little fan support in the past, although total sales on the two titles have been strong enough to justify continued publication, this may change under Mishkin and Cohn. It is not impossible for a low-level title, such as **The X-Men**, **Daredevil**, or the **Teen Titans**, to benefit from a changed direction in handling. It is rare though and it would be difficult to imagine two more challenging books to write from the viewpoint of attaining either critical or sales acclaim. Only time will tell whether Mishkin and Cohn are up to it.

MARVEL NEWS TIDBITS

Crystar #1 will appear on Baxter stock for $1.50 and be tied in with the marketing of the toy of the same name, similar to **G.I. JOE #1**. The shipping date is January 11.

A fill in issue of **Conan** will be done by Kurt Busiek and Richard Howell.

Marvel Two-in-One #98 will co-star The Thing with ROM in a story by Bill Mantlo, Bob Hall, and Kevin Dzuban.

Marvel Team Up #128 teams Spider-Man with the Vision against the Mad Thinker, Dostoyevsky, Confucius, and Mark Twain.

Daredevil's secret identity is imperiled by a blackmailer in issue #194, produced by Alan Brennert and Klaus Janson.

The Vulture puts in an appearance in **Spider-Man #240**.

Captain America #281 guest-stars Spiderwoman.

Kull, The Conqueror will be renumbered to begin with a number one and will change formats to Mando paper stock with the issue shipping January 11. Bruce Jones, John Buscema, and Bob Wiacek do the honors.

Hulk #283 guest-stars The Avengers.

In an update to last month's news, **CF** learned that **Micronauts, Moonknight**, and **Kazar** have been made bi-monthly due to poor sales and that **Dazzler** has been made bi-monthly due to other time demands on the staff.

Louise Jones is editing a one-shot—**Fumetti**, photo-funnies featuring the entire Marvel Bullpen, the freelance staff, and Stan Lee. Danny Fingeroth is overseeing the book.

Besides the projects we announced last issue, Marvel is also planning a series of graphic novels with some very odd titles. Ralph Macchio will be editing **Superfighters** and Chris Claremont and John Bolton's **Black Dragon** while Al Milgrom oversees **Mysterions, Scuff**, and **Wonderwar**. These, of course, are in addition to the novels planned to feature Spiderman, Fantastic Four, Avengers and X-Men.

Super Villain Team-Up will be revived with a new numbering, to feature reprints beginning with the origin of Galactus.

NEW MARVEL EDITORIAL LINEUP

The new breakdown of titles among Marvel editors is as follows:

Tom DeFalco

Spider-Man
Peter Parker
Team Up
Marvel Tales
Cloak & Dagger
Sub-Mariner
Spider-Man Novel (Layton)
Hercules

Mark Gruenwald

Avengers
Iron Man
Thor
Captain America

A new potential member will appear in **Avengers #231**.

X-Men #169 begins a storyline that will reach a climax in issue #175. A whole new group of mutants, who live beneath New York City, are introduced.

Iron Man #170 introduces the new, temporary replacement for Tony Stark, as a new man dons the armor.

Marvel Universe
Super-Villain Team Up

Danny O'Neil

Daredevil
Power/Fist
Bizarre Adventures
Moon Knight
Krull
Hawkeye
G.I. JOE
Alpha Flight

Al Milgrom

Defenders
Fanfare
Hulk
FF
2 in 1 (Thing)
Dr. Strange
Warlock
Spider-Man Novel (Golden)
Dr. Strange Novel
Mysterions Novel
Wonderwar Novel
Scuff Novel

Larry Hama

Savage Sword
Conan
King Conan
Sonja
Machine Man
Star Trek II
Obnoxio vs X-Men
Funny Animals
Crazy
Fire & Ice
Mantis

Louise Jones

Ka-Zar
X-Men
New Mutants
Star Wars
Indiana Jones
Fumetti - One Shot
Nightcrawler
Ilyana and Storm

Ralph Macchio

What If
ROM
Dazzler
US 1
Micronauts
Wonder Man
Crystar
Avengers Novel
Black Dragon Novel
Super Fighters Novel
Kull

Spider-Woman #50 presents the double-sized conclusion of the series.

The Thing and Ben Grimm team up in a sequel to **Marvel Two-in-One #50** in a double-sized issue as John Byrne and Ron Wilson produce the final issue of this title. **The Thing** debuts the following month.

Dracula makes a reappearance in **Thor #332**.

Herb Trimpe will be drawing the new **US 1** title.

In **Hulk #284** the Hulk teams up with the She-Hulk and the Avenger to battle the Leader.

Starfox joins the Avengers in **Avengers #232**.

Indiana Jones #6 is drawn by Kerry Gammill and inked by Sam DeLaRosa.

Master of Kung Fu #125 is a double-sized climax written by Alan Zelenetz and drawn by William Johnson.

Marvel Team-Up #130 teams Spiderman with the Vision and the Scarlet Witch.

In **Defenders #125** Moondragon, Iceman, and the Angel join the team as a completely new line-up takes over the book.

DC NEWS TIDBITS

In **Teen Titans #29** or **#30**, Wonder Girl will marry.
Cyborg will learn that Sarah has a fiance.

The DC tryout book has scheduled several stories to appear when it begins release. Steve Riggenberg has created a new character: The Feral Man. Bepe Sabatini is doing a barbarian. Dave Kellogg and Tom Mandade are doing "The Skydogs", about a group of pirates in a hot air balloon, and set in the 1600's. Kellogg and Ron Randall will be producing "Time Chasers". Dan Reed is also working on a series.

DC Presents #57 presents a most unusual team-up as Superman tries to prevent the creation of the Atomic Knights. Mishkin, Cohn, Saviuk and McLaughlin.

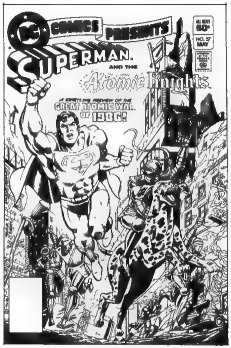
Karate Kid teams up with Batman in **Brave of Bold #198**. Barr and Chuck Patton handle the chores.

In **Blackhawk #258**, the air-aces discover the atomic bomb?

The origin of Broot appears in **Omega Men #5**.

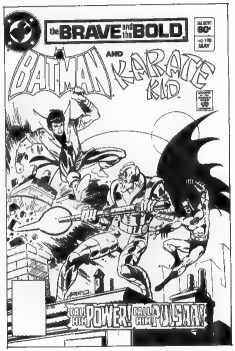
Green Lantern #184 contains a back-up story, "The Inheritance", with pencils by Mike Sekowsky. The other back-up story, "Green Magic", is drawn by Chuck Patton.

Legion of Super-Heroes #300 will be a double-sized issue, climaxing the current storyline.



Night Force #10 concludes the second novel to appear in that title.

The 500th anniversary issue of **Detective Comics**, #256, features virtually every villain Batman has ever faced. Jason Todd becomes—Robin, The Boy Wonder. Todd's background correspondes to Dick Grayson's and so Grayson prompts the Batman to repeat history.



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All-Star Squadron #21 reintroduces the Justice Society of America who will remain on a permanent basis.

In **Wonder Woman #304** the Amazing Amazon faces Dr. Polaris as he tries to shift the magnetic axis of the Earth.

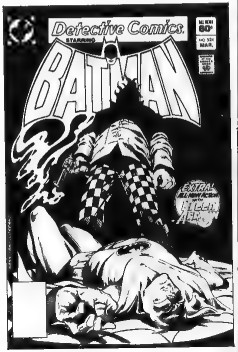
D C Comics Presents #58 features the team of Robin and the Elongated Man with no Superman in sight.

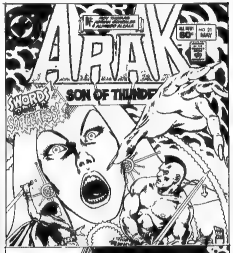
A host of funny animals, led by Peter Porkchops, takes over **The Best of DC Digest #37** as the issue feátures the Three Mouskeeters, Peter Panda, Dodo & The Frog, Sweeny & Willie, The Raccoon Kids, and Doodles Duck.

Brave and the Bold #198 teams Batman with the Spectre.

The Doom Patrol aid Supergirl in fighting Reactron in **The Daring New Adventures of Supergirl #8.**

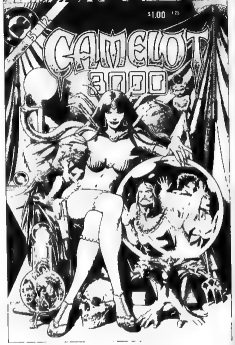
Mike Mechlan inks **All-Star Squadron #22** while Alex Toth drews the Green Arrow strip in **Detective Comics #527**. Gene Day did the cover of the latter title.





Action Comics #544, the anniversary issue, is a 64-page, mandostock package. The book features the complete redesigning of Superman's two main villains, Luthor and Brainiac. Cary Bates pens the Luthor tale while Marv Wolfman handles Brainiac. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster tell all about the Man of Steel and contribute a pin-up, respectively. Also included is a "Who's Who" of features from 45 years of **Action Comics.**

The Legion of Superheroes #300 will be produced in the same format as the special issue of **Action Comics.** Keith Giffen, Dave Cockrum, Joe Staton, James Sherman, Curt Swan, and Kurt Schaffenberger and Howard Bender do the art chores in a storyline that explores the many alternative futures.



Artwork from an upcoming issue of **MICRONAUTS.**

People In The News

Don Heck is off the **JLA**. He may do **Wonder Woman** or **Detective** and will do some "Huntress" installments.

Jerome Moore will take over penciling **World's Finest**.

Chuck Patton is the new penciller on **JLA**.

Joey Cavalieri will be assuming the writing of **Green Lantern**.

Kevin Nowlan pencils **Moon Knight #31**.

Richard Howell will pencil an issue of **Power Man/Iron Fist**.

Dan Jurgens pencils **Batman #359**.

Doug Moench wrote **World's Finest #281**, the first issue with new artist Jerome Moore, and **Arion #7**.

Jose Luiz Garcia-Lopez handles the art chores on **Jonah Hex #72**.

Dazzler #26 will be the last issue by Danny Fingeroth.

ALTERNATIVE NEWS

FIRST COMICS, INC.

Bruce Patterson has taken over the regular inking assignment on **Warp**.

Rick Burchett, who last year wrote and drew a Michael Mauser story for **Charlton Bullseye**, now will be drawing a Mauser story for **E-Man #4**. Writing the story will be Mike Barr, who is also guest writer for the lead story featuring E-Man.

American Flagg has been officially announced as a new series. Howard Chaykin will write and draw this book, scheduled for late Spring release. The book is set on a ravaged, future Earth, governed by "Plexus". The storyline is set within Chicago's Plexmall, a combination airport, spaceport, entertainment center, and hotel. The Plexmall is fortified to resist constant attack from motorcycle gangs. Politics are corrupt, everything is for sale, and murder is routine. Reuben Flagg is a Plexus ranger, sent from Mars to help maintain the status quo. According to Chaykin, Flagg has his own ideas and that is where the fun begins.

RED CIRCLE

Fly #1 will feature a 22-page story drawn by Mark Beachum. The Fox, in a new costume, will be on hand to assist the Fly. Chris Ademes and Trevor Von Eeden will present an updated version of Mr. Justice in the back-up story.

The Web and The Jaguar art chores will be handled by Lou Manna and Willie Blyberg over Rich Buckler's story and Charlie Boatner's script.

PACIFIC COMICS

Twisted Tales #2 will feature Mike Ploog's "Over His Head", Tim Conrad's "Night Watch", Val Mayerik's "Infant Terrible", and Rand Holmes' "Speed Demons". All stories for this book are written and edited by Bruce Jones. **Starslayer #6** is Pacific Comics' last issue. First Comics will assume this title with number seven.

Captain Victory #10 features a back-up story by Tim Conrad.

In **Alien Worlds #2** Dave Stevens presents Aurora, a gorgeous heroine whose adventures are set on a lush, fantasy world. Ken Steacy and Bruce Jones provide additional stories.

Pacific Comics has entered an arrangement with the Joe Kubert Art School to publish at least twelve student-produced comic stories. These will appear at various times in various titles.

NMP
NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING, INC.

NMP has launched several new projects in recent months. The second issue of **The Golden Age of Comics**, following quickly on the heels of the title's well received first issue, centers on Will Eisner. It includes a very large interview section and a previously unreprinted Spirit story. **Rising Star** finally nears release featuring two stories; Steve Adams and Kurt Olsson's "Hawkwind" and Dave Sim's "Blue Dynamo". The latter is the Cerebus' artists' first published superhero venture. **Comic News**, a new $1.00 retail comic-size newszine and **Comic Fandom's Forum**, a revised version of **LOC**, have also seen print.

RBCC Editor, James Van Hise, is producing the definitive book on Al Williamson: **The Art of Al Williamson**. Williamson completely opened his archives to Van Hise for this book. A wealth of visual material is combined with a series of very informative interviews. Interviews with Frank Frazetta, Roy Krenkel, Angelo Torres, William Gaines, Ray Bradbury, George Woodbridge, Gray Morrow, John Prentice, Al McWilliams, and George Evans. There is also a wide-ranging 14,000 word interview with Williamson himself and an introduction by William Stout.

The main art feature is a complete Secret Agent Corrigan adventure which will run 33 pages. Also reprinted are a western strip from 1954, and "The Vicious Space Pirates", a six-page Williamson/Frazetta comic book collaboration. There is also a great deal of miscellaneous artwork.

LES HUMANOIDES ASSOCIES

Jean-Pierre Dionnet has contacted various American, direct-market distributors with tentative plans for republishing Les Humanoides Associes line of graphic novels, in English, for distribution in North America. This would follow in the recent footsteps of Dargaud, who recently released such titles as **Valerian,Walter Melon**, and **The Vagabond of Limbo**.

Dionnet's company, which also publishes **Metal Hurlant**, has provided much of the material which appears in **Heavy Metal**. As such much of their material and many of their artists are known to American readers.

Phillippe Druillet is represented by eight books, Moebius by eleven, Hugo Pratt by seven, and various other artists, not as well known to Americans, by many, many volumes of science fiction, historical fiction, mystery, and humor. Should this project see completion, it will be a major addition to what is available in English at readily accessible prices.

ECLIPSE COMICS

In yet another format change, **Destroyer Duck** and **Scorpio Rose** are scheduled to be released on Baxter stock at $1.50 retail. The third book planned for Baxter format will be **DN Agents**, a new series written by Mark Evanier, drawn by Will Meugniot, and packaged by Mike Friedrich's Star Reach Productions.

Eclipse has also announced the creation of a "Hall of Fame Series" of over-sized books. The first will feature **Women and the Comics**.

Depraved Comics, "The Magazine of New Wave Humor", is a 48-page black and white comic magazine with two color covers. Art is by Q. Bufogle and Tim Donohue.

Galaxia #2 has interior art by Rich Buckler, Butch Guice, Marx Texiera, Sam Delarosa, Frank Travellin, Tom Sciacca, and Willie Blyberg.

Hardboiled Animal Comics #1 is a 48-page comic with black and white interiors on white stock with full-color, heavy-coated stock covers. The material is by Mark Armstrong, Richard Bruning, Rudi Franke, Tim Fuller, Jim March, and others. A who's who of funny animal fandom.

Phil Foglio, of **D'arc Tangent**, Tom Artis, Doug Rice, and Mark Nelson have combined efforts in **Just Imagine #4**.

Vikon is the latest offering from Ken Langraf, the publisher of **Starfighters** and **Rock Comics**. Interior art is by Langraf, Armando Gil, Gene Day, Dave Simons, Willie Blyberg, and Sam DeLaRosa.

Vortex is a new comic-size publication with a full-color cover by Ken Steacy. The lead feature is by Peter Hsu. Other interior art is by Larry McDougall and Joe Haidar. This title is scheduled to appear bi-monthly.

Fun is Sick is a selection from the notebooks of Bruce Carleton, the former director of **Punk Magazine**.

KITCHEN SINK

Kitchen Sink is scheduled to release **Goodman Beaver**, Harvey Kurtzman and Will Elder's satirical strip. The same publisher will begin release of a new bi-monthly title devoted to the work of Milton Caniff in January. **Milton Caniff's Steve Canyon** will be a companion title to **Will Eisner's Spirit**.

Adventure Express, presenting graphic stories by European creators, is a new title announced for release by Flying Buttress. The biggest attraction will be "Lt. Blueberry" by Moebius.

KEN PIERCE BOOKS

Ken Pierce has a new series of books scheduled for release including: **Modesty Blaise Vol. 4**, **Axa #3**, **Cisco Kid**, **Mike Hammer Vol. 2**, and **Amanda Vol. 1**.

Animation News

CHIPMUNK DAY

Los Angeles is always declaring official days. However, one of the strangest proclamations was the one declaring October 25, 1982, as Chipmunk Day in honor of those singing sensations Alvin, Theodore and Simon. The Chipmunks first hit the scene in 1958, and since that time they have sold over 35 million records worldwide. Their original creator, Ross Bagdasarian, retired the chipmunks in 1967, shortly before his death. Bagdasarian was the voice of each of the chipmunks plus their "parent" David Seville. Bagdasarian's son, Ross Jr., brought them out of retirement in 1980 to perform on the hit album "Chipmunk Punk". (Ross Jr. does all the voices except Theodore; his wife Janice does that chipmunk.) "Chipmunk Punk" went platinum, selling more than a million copies. The follow-up album, "Urban Chipmunk", also sold a million copies. To celebrate the release of the third album, "The Chipmunks Go Hollywood", Bagdasarian got the city of Los Angeles to declare a Chipmunk Day. The festivities started when three performers dressed as the

chipmunks performed at L.A. Children's Hospital. That concert was followed by another performance on a specially constructed stage in the parking lot of Tower Records on Sunset Boulevard. Finally, there was a "paw print in cement" ceremony. For those fans who still have not had their fill of chipmunks, Begdasarian Jr. is currently negotiating for a new Saturday morning TV series featuring the chipmunks.

FROM CELS TO STAGE

Last year, Walt Disney Productions signed a three-year agreement with Broadway producers Elizabeth McCann and Nelle Nugent to develop plays that Walt Disney Productions might eventually turn in to good films. Last June, the first production appeared. Disney financed a $60,000 workshop production of a play called "Total Abandon" about a man on trial for child abuse. While Disney kept its name off the production, it does have first refusal on the project. The producers would like to take the play to Broadway at the beginning of 1983, but need an additional $500,000 to do so. Final word is that Disney is planning on reviewing the author's rewrites on the play and then deciding to either "press forward and fund a Broadway production or back out and hopefully recapture our investment when they capitalize their project somewhere else" according to Christopher Gorog, Disney director of business affairs. CBS Theatrical Films reportedly spent $200,000 for the rights to the Betty Boop cartoon character in hopes that it could be transformed into a theatrical musical like "Annie".

KING DICK RELEASED

A new "old" animated film was recently released in New York and should be appearing across the rest of the country by the time this item sees print. "King Dick" is the U.S. release version of a European animated feature originally titled "Little Dick, The Mighty Midget" which filmed in 1973. It features badly dubbed English dialog and humor that may be offensive to most viewers. The 65-minute feature concerns the adventures of Little Dick, a midget servant who must fall in love with the hag witch Nymphomanie to break a spell and return himself and her to their original status of beautiful prince and princess. Sexual frolics dominate the action, with repeated references to the tiny hero's huge "member". The film was apparently a joint effort of the Italians and the French.

BITS AND PIECES

Friz Freleng is apparently still working at Warner Brothers Studios in their animation department, although the job offer for him at Hanna Barbera still remains open. Freleng will work on at least two more compilation films, one of which will feature clips from old Daffy Duck cartoons. The rumors in the L.A. area still insist that Warners is considering dismantling the new animation unit because there are no more openings on television for compilation specials...Another interesting rumor is the statement that if EPCOT does not do the business its builders expect, then barring any unforseen financial boom, the Walt Disney Studios may be sold to the highest bidder. The Xerox corporation and a Japanese conglomerate have both expressed interest in acquiring the studio. It is no secret that the Studio has been in financial trouble for a long time, due to the poor showing of its recent features at the box office...Concerning the Disney channel, a recent column in the **Hollywood Reporter** mentioned that the Disney cable company might purchase Bluth's **The Secret of Nimh** for broadcast over its network...Sharp eared movie fans may have caught the fact that in Spielberg's **Poltergeist**, the little bird is named Tweety and the family's name is Freeleng. When Friz Freleng heard

about this, he drew a cartoon of Sylvester the cat weeping over a tiny coffin containing Tweety and sent it to Spielberg...Art Clokey, originator of Gumby, is considering starting work on a full length film featuring the character after renewed interest in the character has once again brought him to the spotlight...Bluth Productions lost its financial backers for its "East of the Sun, West of the Moon" animated feature which was said to be one month and $500,000 into production when the animator's strike began. Original backers drop-out fearing union concessions would raise the budget of the project out of their price range. Bluth has announced the creation of a commercial division to help keep the company afloat. Bluth will be doing commercials for Lincoln/Mercury...Ideals publishing has released two children's picture books using illustrations from Chuck Jones' productions of "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" and "The White Seal"....

A page from **ALPHA FLIGHT #1**

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STRIP NEWS

Doonesbury. It's official. Doonesbury goes on vacation January 3, 1982. No replacement strip, no reruns, just no more Doonesbury for a year and a half. We will miss it. On the other hand, who deserves a vacation more than Gary Trudeau?

Buck Rogers. Jack Sparling is the new artist on the Buck Rogers strip, replacing Gray Morrow. Sparling has done a great deal of comic book work. Previous strip work includes some ghosting on Dan Flagg. The first Sparling Buck Rogers is dated October 24, 1982. The Buck Rogers strip is now carried in very few papers. The script is by Cary Bates.

...AND THE DOCTOR SAYS I'M IN PERFECT HEALTH, SO IT'S REALLY UP TO US TO DECIDE WHETHER TO GO THROUGH WITH HAVING THE BABY.
SO HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT ALL OF THIS, RICK? DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD HAVE IT?
JOANIE, AT YOUR AGE, HAVING A BABY IS JUST TOO RISKY. IT'D BE ASKING FOR TROUBLE!
THEN I SHOULD TERMINATE IT?
YOU MEAN AN ABORTION? NO WAY! FORGET IT! NEITHER OF US COULD HANDLE THAT!
RICK, I'M AFRAID HAVING IT OR NOT HAVING IT ARE THE ONLY OPTIONS.
ARE YOU SURE? MAYBE WE SHOULD FIND ANOTHER DOCTOR.
GB/Archer

Star Trek. The Star Trek comic strip may have folded. "May" because the syndicate reported it as folded while it was still appearing, so it is hard to verify this. The final strip seen has the look of an ending strip. If it is truly gone, it ran for just under three years: from December 2, 1979 to October 30, 1982.

ENGINEERING TO BRIDGE -- ADMIRAL, ALL SYSTEMS ARE OPERATIONAL AND READY WHEN YOU ARE, SIR.
MISTER SULU, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE. DIRECT OUR COURSE TO MANARK I AND NO STOPPING ALONG THE WAY -- SQUABBLES OR NO SQUABBLES!
YES, SIR!

...THE EMPIRE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT PROPERLY MAINTAINING THEIR DROIDS!
AT LEAST WE GET TO GO ALL OVER THE SHIP REPAIRING THEM...
SO ARTOO CAN RECORD IN DETAIL HOW THIS MONSTERS PUT TOGETHER WITH THAT INFO THE ALLIANCE CAN --
YOU! DROID MECHANIC, I

The **Star Wars** comic strip has just finished a story about the discovery of the ice planet Hoth. The current story gives us our first real look at a major character from the new Star Wars film: Admiral Ackbar, who we will see more of in **Revenge of the Jedi**. The **Star Wars** strip is still written by Archie Goodwin and drawn by Al Williamson. The official word is that the **Star Wars** strip is in trouble because it has lost a number of papers recently.

WHAT HAPPENED, MR. --
CODE-NAMES, HALO-- CODE-NAMES!
EXCELLENT!
...AND WE'LL BE AROUND WHEN YOU NEED US!
SSSS
IDIOT! THIS WON'T STOP ME!
OH, YES!
I--I SURRENDER!
BEHIND YOU, KATANA!
BLACK LIGHTNING!
UNNGH--!
HEY, I KNOW THE MOOD IS BAD, BUT IS THIS THE ANSWER?
© 1982 DC Comics

THE OUTSIDERS
DC's new comic starring Batman and Company.

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THIS MONTH IN COMICS

MARVEL

1/4 Shipping

Team America #12—Written by Jim Shooter. Pencils by Don Perlin. Inks by Vince Colletta. It's the double-sized climax to the story of Team America as this last issue reveals, finally, the identity of the Mysterious Marauder.

The New Mutants #3—Written by Chris Claremont. Pencils by Bob McLeod. Psyche pulls terrifying images from the mind of Professor Xavier, which take on horrific reality and attempt to destroy the young team.

Marvel Two-in-One #88—Written by Bill Mantlo. Pencils by Bob Hall. Inks by Kevin Dzuban. A change of pace as The Thing and Rom, Space Knight, trade "Ghost Stories for a Rainy Night."

Dazzler #28—(Previously shipping 12/7/82, now bi-monthly) Written by Danny Fingeroth. Pencils by Frank Springer. Inks by Vince Colletta. Does Dazzler's sister actually have mutant powers? Can the two of them survive on the run for a crime Dazzler did not commit? Questions that may soon be answered by the government super-agent Henry Peter Gyrich and the malevolent Mutant Hunters!

KA-ZAR #26—Written by Bruce Jones. Pencils by Ron Frenz. Inks by Armando Gil. It may be Ka-Zar's last chance to "Escape from New York" as he must decide whether to stay in the city and live, ensuring permanent madness for Shanna, or to return to the Savage Land, which would mean her cure but his death. Plus a "Tale of Zabu" by Jones and Val Meyerik, and a wraparound photo-background cover.

Dark Crystal #2—Written by David Anthony Kraft. Pencils by Bret Blevins. Inks by Vince Colletta. The Three Suns are at the time of conjunction, the Skeksis stand ready to claim total domination, and the Gelflings, Jen and Kira, fight a last-ditch effort against huge odds in the conclusion of this adaptation of the Jim Henson fantasy film.

King Conan #16—Written by Alan Zelenetz. Pencils by Mark Sylvestri. A massacre in a small village sparks friction between Conan and his son. Conn, and an exploration of the morality of some forms of military action.

Daredevil #194—Plotted by Alan Brennert. Pencils by Klaus Janson. Daredevil's secret identity is imperiled by a blackmailer after a drunken Heather Glenn lets slip that Hornhead is actually Matt Murdock!

1/11 Shipping

Spider-Man #240—Written by Roger Stern. Pencils by John Romita, Jr. Inks by Bob Layton. Spidey battles the high-flying Vulture.

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Micronauts #52—(Previously shipping 12/14, now bi-monthly)—Written by Bill Mantlo. Pencils by Butch Guice. Inks by Dan Bulanadi. Why isn't Acroyear battling against Baron Karza's plot to take over Homeworld? Because he's busy battling for his life in trial-by combat as he discovers "Home is Where the Heart Is."

Thor #331—Written by Alan Zelenetz. Pencils by Bob Hall. Inks by Vince Colletta. Part two of the Thunder God's struggle with the Crusader has Thor fighting his own perceptions as well, as he strives to come to grips with his own ideas of godhood in a world where he no longer has worshippers.

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Captain America #281—Written by J. M. DeMatteis. Pencils by Mike Zeck. Inks by John Beatty. The Viper strikes back. Guest starring Spider-Woman.

Ghost Rider #80—Written by J. M. DeMatteis. Pencils by Bob Budiansky. Inks by Kevin Dzuban. Johnny Blaze is in a town held in a grip of fear by a preacher who, through his fire-and-brimstone sermons, has earned the name The Sin Eater. But the Ghost Rider knows something about fire and brimstone himself as he crashes through "Stained Glass and Shadows."

Moon Knight #31—Written by Doug Moench. Art by Kevin Nowlan. What effect can "A Box of Music for Savage Skulls" have on the destiny of a New York City neighborhood? Only Moon Knight can find out.

Indiana Jones #5—Written by David Michelinie. Pencils by Ron Frenz. In the wrap-up of a two partner, Nazis threaten to release demons through Stonehenge, and Indy must stop them or England will fall.

U.S. 1 #1—Written by Al Milgrom. Artist to be announced. Introducing Ulysses Solomon Archer, A.K.A. U.S.1, and his bizarre supporting cast—Wide Load Annie, Mary McGrill, Poppa Wheelie, and their greatest enemy—the Highwaymen!

SuperVillain TeamUp #1 - Reprinting (but for the first time in chronological order) the origin of Galactus, as written by Mark Gruenwald with art by Jack Kirby and Ron Wilson.

Kull the Conqueror #1—Continuing the story of Kull of Atlantis, but in a new format (on Mando paper). Bruce Jones (writer), John Buscema (pencils) and Bob Wiacek (inks) tell the story of Iraine, she who has "The Eye of the Tigress", and is determined to take the throne of Valusia away from Kull through the use of her tiger totem (the same as Kull's) and a secret relationship that she shares with the monarch of the City of Wonders.

Crystar #1—Written by Mary Jo Duffy. Pencils by Bret Blevins. Inks by Vince Colletta. Beginning the saga of Crystar and Moltar, two loving brothers who become bitter enemies as they compete for the throne of Crystalium at the behest of two wizards—the evil Zardeth and the benevolent Ogeode.

1/18 Shipping

Hulk #283—Written by Bill Mantlo. Pencils by Sal Buscema. Inks by Joe Sinnott. Featuring the plans of the Leader, the power of Omnivac, and guest-starring The Avengers.

Avengers #231—Written by Roger Stern. Pencils by Al Milgrom. Inks by Joe Sinnott. Plant Man kidnaps the most important man in the United States and the Avengers must get him back. And to do it, they'll need the might of their new member plus the Avenger candidate who has just shown up on their doorstep.

Conan #146—Written by Alan Zelenetz. Pencils by Richard Howell. Conan, a "Son of Cimmeria", returns to his native land to encounter a race of Bear Worshippers.

Marvel Tales #151—Spider-Man faces the "Menace of Mysterio" from Spider-Man #13, written by Stan "The Man" Lee and pencilled by "Stainless" Steve Ditko.

X-Men #169—Written by Chris Claremont. Pencils by Paul Smith. Inks by Bob Wiacek. Beginning a continuity that will climax in issue #175, and introducing an entire group of mutants who live in the catacombs of New York City, the leader of whom falls in love with the high-flying Angel and decides to kidnap him.

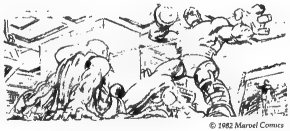
ROM #42-Written by Bill Mantlo. Pencils by Sal Buscema. Inks by Ian Akin and Brian Garvey. For the first time in his career, Rom gets out of his space armor as part of a bizarre exchange with the man/computer, Quasimodo.

Power Man/Iron Fist #93—Written by Kurt Busiek. Pencils by Denys Cowan. Denny and Luke become involved with a documentary film crew, never dreaming that it will eventually lead them into making "The Chemistro Connection."

G.I. JOE #11-Written by Larry Hama. Pencils by Mike Vosburg. G.I. JOE must foil a plot by Cobra to hijack nuclear materials via the Alaskan pipeline.

1/25 Shipping

Fantastic Four #254—A John Byrne production. The evil Zalharan needs a great intellect to utilize in his plans to take over his planet. And guess what great intellect, not to mention stretchable scientist, happens to be passing through the Negative Zone?



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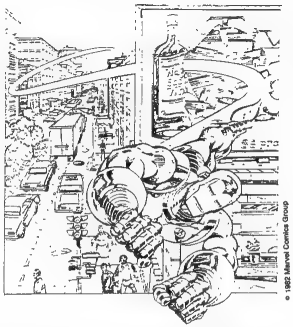
Marvel Team-Up #129—Written by J. M. DeMatteis. Pencils by Kerry Gammill. Inks by Mike Esposito. Spider-Man and the Vision team against the Mad Thinker who has at his disposal some of the most off-beat allies ever, such as Dostoyevsky, Confucius, and Mark Twain!



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Iron Man #170—Written by Denny O'Neil. Pencils by Luke McDonnell. Inks by Steven Mitchell. Tony Stark is out of the picture. Magma is running wild. And then, enter Iron Man! But if Stark is incapacitated because of his alcoholism, then who's in the armor?

Peter Parker #78—Written by Bill Mantlo. Pencils by Al Milgrom. While Doc Ock prepares to pursue his life of crime, the Black Cat swears off crime forever. Guest appearances by the Punisher, Boomerang, and Shanna the She-Devil.

Defenders #118—Written by Steven Grant. Pencils by Sal Buscema. Inks by Jack Abel. The return of Yandroth means civil war as Yandroth takes over the minds of some of the team members, pitting Defender against Defender.

Star Wars #71—Written by Mary Jo Duffy. Pencils by Ron Frenz. Inks by Tom Palmer. Luke, Leia, and Chewbacca go to the planet Stenos, there to have the final showdown with the bounty hunter who may be able to lead them to the missing Han Solo.

Master of Kung Fu #124—Written by Alan Zelenetz. Pencils by William Johnson. Shang Chi returns to China, pursued by the Si-Fan, and this time the Si-Fan, furious over the death of Fu Manchu, are aided by an unexpected ally: Shang Chi's mother!

Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe #5—Featuring the artwork of Bob Layton, John Byrne and Bill Sienkiewicz as the Handbook covers Grim Reaper through Iron Man.

Warlock #8—The conclusion of the story of Warlock, by Jim Starlin, chronicalling his death, his return, and his final showdown with the mad Thanos, which first appeared in Avengers Annual #7 and Marvel Two-In-One Annual #2.

From the Epic Line:

Epic Illustrated #17—(April issue, shipping 1/18, on sale 2/8) Featuring the last chapter of "Abraxas and the Earthman" by Rick Veitch, the third installment of "Last of the Dragons" by Denny O'Neil and Carl Potts, "The Demon" by Japanese animator Go Nagi (of "Starvengers" fame), "The Wanderer" by Mike Kaluta, and a cover by Tim Conrad.

Dreadstar #3—(Shipping 1/24, on sale 2/14) A Jim Starlin production. Dreadstar and his band split forces in their attempt to steal the instrumentality's star drive, but it does not go well for Vance's party as they find themselves trapped on a doomed planet.

And Previously Mentioned—

Star Slammers [Marvel Graphic Novel #6 *(note new number)*—(Previously shipping 11/8, now shipping 1/4/83) They're here: The Intergalactic Mercenaries known as the Star Slammers, written and drawn by Walt Simonson. Learn who they are and why they must fight a war for their own survival and evolution.

Marvel Magazines:

Savage Sword of Conan #87—(April issue, shipping 1/11, on sale 2/1) Written by Michael Fleisher. Pencils by John Buscema. Inks by Ernie Chan. He has killed his mentor for it. He has tricked Conan into helping him locate it. And when he finally dons it, "The Magic Armor" transforms him into a fighting machine that not even Conan can beat.

Crazy #94—(April issue, shipping 1/11, on sale 2/1) They're here. But not for long. Crazy's swan song issue gives us "Poltergeist" sent up by Alan Kupperberg and Bob Camp, a re-lettered version of Neal Adam's Kree-Skrull War, and a parody of the Smurfs by Marie Severin.

Blip #2—(March issue, shipping 1/18, on sale 2/8) Featuring more games, strategy tips and contests on the ever-expanding video field.

Marvel Age #2—(Shipping 1/18, on sale 2/8) Featuring articles.

Marvel Fanfare #8—(Shipping 1/18, on sale 2/8) Written by Peter Gillis. Pencils by Carmine Infantino. Inks by Craig Russell. A novice sorceror basks in "The Light That Never Was" as he lets loose more enchantment than he can handle and Dr. Strange must intercede, and quickly.

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DC

1/11 Shipping

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #214- Part two of the microcosmos saga. Written by Gerry Conway, drawn by Don Heck, and inked by Romeo Tanghal.

WONDER WOMAN #303- Wonder Woman battles a Green Lantern foe. Dan Mishkin, writer; Gene Colan, penciller; Frank McLaughlin, inker. Plus The Huntress by Joey Cavalieri.

ARAK #21- Arak invades the citadel of Angelica. Plus a Valda installment. Story by Roy and Danette Thomas, pencils by Adrian Gonzales, inks by Alfredo Alcala.

BLACKHAWK #258- Blackhawk encounters an atomic bomb. Story by Mark Evanier, art by Dan Spiegle. Howard Cheykin cover.

DC COMICS PRESENTS #57- Superman attempts to prevent the creation of the Atomic Knights in a story by Mishkin, Cohn, Saviuk, and McLaughlin. Cover by Saviuk and Giordano.

FIRESTORM #12- Story by Conway, pencils by Broderick, inks by Rodriguez. Cover by Broderick and Giordano.

ADVENTURE COMICS DIGEST #498- Reprints. Cover by Kane.

THE BEST OF DC DIGEST#36- Six stories involving Kryptonite are reprinted. Cover by Andru and Giordano.

AMETHYST, PRINCESS OF GEMWORLD #1- Beginning a 12-part maxi-series by Ernie Colon.

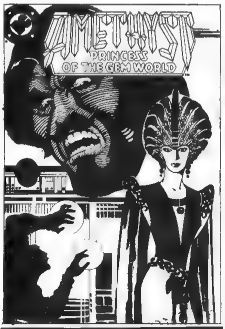
1/18

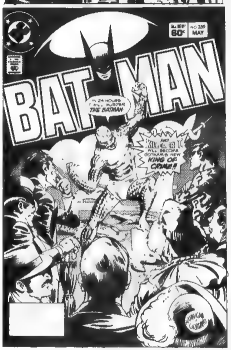
BATMAN #359- The rise of King Croc. Story by Conway, pencils by Dan Jurgens, inks by Giordano. Cover by Hannigan and Giordano.

THE FLASH #321- Tomer Re brings the Flash a warning as subplots begin to coalesce. Bates, Infantino, Jensen. Plus The Creeper by Gafford and Gibbons.

G.I. COMBAT #253- The usual assortment of war stories. Includes a Mercenaries story.

SUPERMAN #383- Story by Cary Bates, art by Curt Swan and Dave Hunt.





THE NEW TEEN TITANS #31- Marv Wolfman, George Perez and Romeo Tanghal present a journey into the darkest depths of Zandia.

SWAMP THING #13- The climax of a four-part story. Marty Pasko and Tom Yeates.

THE OMEGA MEN#2-Slifer, Giffen, and DeCarlo create another sensational installment of DCs first regular series in the new Baxter format.

1/25

THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #198- Karate Kid teams with the Batman in a story by Mike Barr and Chuck Patton. Cover by Aparo.

GREEN LANTERN #164- Barr and Pollard, Cohn, Sekowsky, and Trapani, and Klein and Patton create the three stories which make up this issue.

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #316- I...Vampire by Mishkin, Cohn, and Sutton. Plus two back-up features.

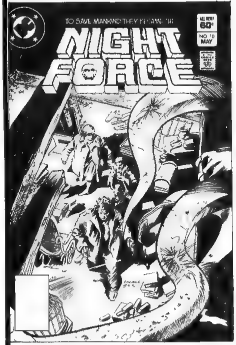
SGT. ROCK #376- Return of the Dummy by Kanigher and Redondo. Cover by Kubert.

THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #298- Levitz, Giffen, and Mahlstedt set the scene for the upcoming special double-issue.

SUPERGIRL #7-Kupperberg, Infantino, and Oskner. Plus Lois Lane by O'Flynn and Oskner.

WARLORD #69- Mike Grell scripts and Dan Jurgens pencils. The Barren Earth supporting feature is by Cohn and Randall. Cover by Grell.

THE NIGHT FORCE #10- The final instalment of the second sequence is by Wolfman, Colan, and Smith. Cover by Colan and Smith.



2/1

ACTION COMICS #543 Superman faces Vandal Savage in a story by Wolfmen and Kane. Cover by Kane.

DETECTIVE COMICS #526- Anniversary edition featuring the introduction of a new Robin. Gerry Conway, Don Newton, and Dick Giordano do the honors. Cover by Newton and Giordano.

JONAH HEX #72- Garcia-Lopez and Mike Reisher present "The Wheelchair Bounty Hunter". Andru and Giordano do the cover.

WEIRD WAR TALES #123- A story by Mishkin, Cohn, Buckler, and Giacoia. Cover by Kubert.

WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #291- Doug Moench and Jerome Moore present the latest story in this rapidly improving title.

ALL-STAR SQUADRON #21- The first of the JSA dominated issues by Thomas, Ordway, and Machlan. Sporting an Ordway cover.

ARION #7- Doug Moench is guest writer and Jan Duursema continues on the art chores. Cover by Duursema.

CAPTAIN CARROT AND HIS AMAZING ZOO CREW #15- Concluding the multi-part story.

SUPERBOY #41- Story by Paul Kupperberg and art by Kurt Scheffenberger. Dial H for Hero is by Bridwell, Rozakis, and Bender.

GREEN ARROW MINI-SERIES #1-Beginning a new series, with the Emerald Archer in stories by Mike Barr, Trevor Von Eeden, and Dick Giordano. Cover by Von Eeden and Giordano.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM
CEREBUS #48

ARCHIE COMICS
1/4 shipping
BETTY AND VERONICA #323
LAUGH #377
ARCHIE COMICS DIGEST #58
1/11 shipping
ARCHIE ANNUAL DIGEST
1/18 shipping
LIFE WITH ARCHIE #238
BETTY AND ME #133
1/25 shipping
LITTLE ARCHIE ANNUAL DIGEST #12

ECLIPSE
SABRE #4 [Shipping mid-January] Don McGregor and Billy Graham's story is set in Yellowstone Park. Plus The Incredible Seven by B.C. Boyer.

FIRST COMICS
E-MAN #2 [Shipping 1/11] Cover by Joe Staton. "'F' As in 'Freak' " is by Marty Pasko and Joe Staton. Plus Mike Mist by Collins and Beatty.

WARP#3 [Shipping 1/11] Cover by Frank Brunner. Adaptation and pencils by Frank Brunner, dialogue by Peter Gillis, inks by Bob Smith. Plus Steve Ditko and Jack Harris present The Faceless Ones.

PACIFIC COMICS
PACIFIC PRESENTS #2[Shipping 1/26] Cover by Dave Stevens. The ROCKETEER by Stevens is the lead story. Steve Ditko's "Missing Man" meets the Payne Family.

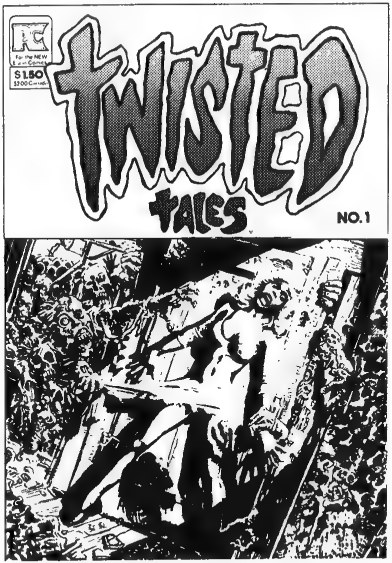
STARSLAYER #6 [Shipping 1/18] Cover by Mike Grell. The climax of the plot that has run through the previous five issues. Torin MacQuillin learns the secret of his destiny.

SILVER STAR #2 [Shipping 1/11] Cover by Jack Kirby and Mike Royer. Davis Drum is a fire-eating evangelist of evil. Silver Star gathers about him those who are more than human. Can anyone survive their conflict?

TWISTED TALES #2 [Shipping 1/26] Cover by Berni Wrightson. A quartet of tales from writer/editor Bruce Jones. Mike Ploog, Tim Conrad, Val Mayerik, and a surprise artist. "White "Baxter" Stock.

MS. MYSTIC #2- By Neal Adams.

SHAMBLING YOUR WAY THIS FALL...



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TOM DEFALCO

Interviewed

BY Kurt Busiek

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FEATURE: Well, we might as well start at the beginning. Where did your career begin? Did you first work for Archie? Or somewhere else?

DEFALCO: My professional comic career started with Archie Comics. I think the first job I had was opening the mail for "Dear Betty and Veronica". I graduated from that to pasting down the letter columns. By the end of my first week I was proofreading the books. After that it gets nebulous.

FEATURE: All I really know about your work for Archie is that you were an editor. Did you do any writing?

DEFALCO: Yes, I did a lot of writing for Archie, however, I could never claim an editor's title. John Goldwater, who is the publisher, is also listed as the editor. Richard Goldwater, his son, has the title of Managing Editor. They are the owners of the company and I worked below them. At one point, they gave me a strange title—Editorial Director—or something like that. It was a bull title.

FEATURE: Grand High Kahuna. (Laughter)

DEFALCO: Yes. That's it.

FEATURE: Okay, so whatever the name of the job was—what did you do? What were the responsibilities?

DEFALCO: My responsibilities were to make sure that good comic books came out of Archie. Richard would buy the scripts and assign them to artists. After that it was my job. There is an art director, Victor Gorelick, who is in charge of production. He handled the art and production end, and I made sure that the stories made sense, used proper grammar, and the jokes were funny.

FEATURE: Okey. Well, what did you write for the Archie comics?

DEFALCO: At one point or another, I wrote everything except THAT WILKIN BOY. I think that's the only feature that I never got around to doing anything for. I didn't particularly like the concept or like the way it was going. I was going to give it a new direction. I did a week's worth of stories and said, "C'mon, we should go in this direction." They looked at it and decided that they preferred what they already had. So I went back to **Archie and Jughead**, which I had a lot of fun doing.

FEATURE: The **Archie Comics** are very different from what most of the **Comics Feature** reader know, the Marvels and DCs. Do you think that there's value in the Archie style?

DEFALCO: Yes, I think the Archie style and the Archie product would be viable in today's market if it was produced a little better. I don't think the quality is there anymore. I think for their type of material, Archie has the best writers and artists in the world. Nobody can compete with what those guys do. But they no longer have the pressure on them to do their best work. Their top writer—who is fabulous—has been getting ready to retire for the last six years. His name is Frank Doyle. For that type of stuff, there will never be a writer who can match Frank Doyle's material.

FEATURE: Yeah, I'll pick up anything that's been written by Doyle.

DEFALCO: And he's been getting ready to retire for at least the last six years. A lot of the Archie people are capable of fabulous work, but the pressure isn't on them to do that kind of work. I think I remember a press release about them putting more panels on a page and putting extra words in, but I don't think that's any sort of solution. Mort Walker sells more syndicated strips than anybody, and he has fewer panels and fewer words than anybody else. It's the quality, it's not the quantity.

FEATURE: Okay, well, I'm going to get to how coming from **Archie Comics** applies to editing for Marvel later, but we might as well go on to your work for DC comics. You were a writer for DC for a while if I remember correctly.

DEFALCO: I think I wrote for DC for a period of approximately two years. I worked on a couple of special projects for Joe Orlando. I don't think any of them were ever printed in this country. One of them was a 68-page Christmas book which ran into a problem because it was prepared as a special treasury book, and the treasury book right before us was **Superman Vs. Muhammad Ali**. That bombed, so they decided to kill the treasury line with that issue. So my book, which was completed, was killed. I think it recently appeared in France. I ran into a certain pattern at DC. I would be assigned to a book. I would write two issues and plot a third, and then the book would be cancelled. So I worked for DC for about a year, in which no story that I ever wrote appeared in print [laughter]. Somewhere along the line, they put me on **Superman Family**, where my stories finally started appearing regularly. I didn't manage to kill that book. I tried [laughter].

FEATURE: That's where I first noticed your name—on "Superboy" features.

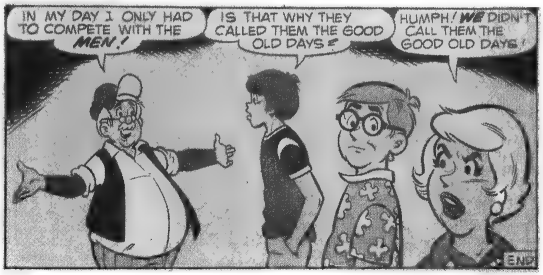
DEFALCO: At one point I was doing "Superboy", "Jimmy Olsen", "Lois Lane"—I think an issue of **Starfire** actually came out. I worked on **Claw**, but none of the **Claw** stuff ever came out.

FEATURE: And now, of course, **Superman's Family** has just been cancelled.

DEFALCO: They can't blame that one on me.

FEATURE: No—so that was working with Julie Schwartz?

DEFALCO: No, I was working with Nelson Bridwell. I never worked with Julie Schwartz. When I was working on **Superman Family**, Nelson Bridwell was the editor. Working for Nelson was a real pleasure. He was somebody totally committed to the characters and the work, and had this infectious enthusiasm for anything that he got involved with. I had read **Superman** and **Jimmy Olsen** when I was growing up. But over the years, those features had been overshadowed by what Stan was doing. Nelson infected me with enthusiasm for that material, and made me care about those characters again. Nelson is someone who could be a great contributor over there.


IN MY DAY I ONLY HAD TO COMPETE WITH THE MEN!
IS THAT WHY THEY CALLED THEM THE GOOD OLD DAYS?
HUMPH! WE DIDN'T CALL THEM THE GOOD OLD DAYS!
END
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FEATURE: Nelson seems to be doing less and less these days, in terms of writing at least. The **Shazam** series has just gone, and I can't think of anything else he's writing.

DEFALCO: Well, he's got a lot of talent, and like I say, a lot of enthusiasm and dedication to the stuff...

FEATURE: Oh yeah, he's writing a couple **Captain Carrots**...

DEFALCO: I'll be interested in seeing that because he's one of the few writers in this business who actually has a sense of humor.

FEATURE: That story may have been drawn by Stan Goldberg.

DEFALCO: One of the Archie guys.

FEATURE: Yeah. He just recently did a **Captain Carrot** job, and they were very happy with it. I also hear Dan DeCarlo is doing a **Smurfs**...

DEFALCO: Yes, Dan is doing a **Smurfs**, and a number of other things. Just because a guy can draw Archie, doesn't mean that's all he can do.

FEATURE: Oh, I think it's great. Okay—working with the Archie characters and Superman characters, who can all be considered very old-style characters—they have sort of a rigid framework that they fall into, and you really have to hunt to do something new with the characters—although certainly good stuff can be done, as Cary Bates is proving every month in **Superman**. Would you say that that experience helped you out in terms of learning the craft of writing and editing?

DEFALCO: Guess so. I don't really understand the question—or the expression, "the old-style characters." Once any character is set up, you can refer to him as an old style character. By the fourth issue of **Spider-Man**, he could be considered an old-style character. A character is only as vital and alive as you make him. Characters only have as much potential as you can infuse into them. Archie characters have immense possibilities. I was scheduled to do four stories a week at one point, and I had to do six because I couldn't get all the ideas out fast enough. As for Superman, Jimmy Olsen and Lois Lane—"Lois Lane" I never had any problem with; whe was a real person with unlimited story possibilities. Jimmy Olsen...Nelson was very interested in tying up loose continuity, so for the most part he directed where the plots on "Jimmy Olsen" would go, and I just tried to construct the stories around his plots. "Superboy", again has a lot of possibilities. A writer is only limited by his own imagination. There's no such thing as a dead character.

I had also worked for Charlton...

FEATURE: Okay, tell me something about that.

DEFALCO: Let's see...for one reason or another, I was going through one of my moods, and wanted to do different types of material. I called up Charlton—George Wildman was the editor at the time—and said "Hey, I'd like to do some writing for you!" He had never heard of me, of course. No one had ever heard of me. I worked in the business for ten years without a byline. I said, "Well, can I send you a sample?" This was years ago when writers would actually turn in samples. So I sent him some stuff and he assigned me a book to write. I turned that in, and he said, "Y'know, I really like your stuff" and the next day he called me up and assigned me to write nine titles for Charlton. Every week I would write a book for Charlton. And I had also gotten out of my funk at the time, so I was writing a book for Charlton, and about fifteen pages a week for Archie, plus, of course, showing up at Archie.

FEATURE: Sounds like a full schedule.

DEFALCO: Yes, it kept me off the streets a lot (laughter). At Charlton I worked on some interesting things...**Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch**. I think John Byrne did the first issue of that title. I worked with Joe Staton. I didn't work **with** him; Joe Staton did the art, but I never met any of the artists at Charlton. I never even met George Wildman, and I worked for him for about a year. Let's see, I also did **The Flintstones**, and **Hong Kong Phooey** and things like that. I've always been interested in those kinds of characters. You can do things with those characters that you can't do with the Archie characters or the super-hero characters.

FEATURE: Yeah.

DEFALCO: I worked for Charlton until the whole company went out of business. I shouldn't say "went out of business." At some point, I don't know what year—I'm going to say 1976, but if you check your history books, you'll find out that I'm probably far off—Charlton had stopped all publication.

FEATURE: I remember that...I don't remember when it happened either.

DEFALCO: I am terrible with dates and names...even characters that I create—next month I've totally forgotten what their names are. I always had to have a crib sheet above my desk, listing the names of all the characters for whatever series it is that I'm writing. I always remember their dialogue patterns; I always remember their characterization, I always remember how they react to situations—I can't remember their names! (Laughter)

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FEATURE: Currently, of course, Charlton has just gone all-reprint again—Charlton Bullseye has just been cancelled.

DEFALCO: Charlton Bullseye was cancelled?

FEATURE: Yeah. Poor sales. They're looking for another publisher to pick up the material they already have in the office with no place to publish it.

DEFALCO: Well, DC is doing that sort of thing now...

FEATURE: And there are a few other similar projects under way. So there seem to be more opportunities out for the enterprising young comics creator.

DEFALCO: Yes, but those are not real opportunities. Those are illusions of opportunities. The only time you have a real opportunity is when you get a paycheck for what you do. If you're doing your work for free, then you could be self-publishing—and it doesn't matter. The only time you realize that a publisher or an editor has confidence in your material is when he gives you a check for it.

FEATURE: DC is paying standard beginner's rates for their project.

I DON'T WANT ANY OF YOU TO FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE AND BE MEAN AND SNOBBISH LIKE THIS ...
I'M RICH, AND SPOILED, AND IT'S EXPECTED OF ME!
© 1982 Archie Comics

DEFALCO: As I understand it, and I've only read press releases, the DC thing will be an excellent training ground. Because it'll mean working with Marv Wolfman, who will make guys do the work over and over again until they get it right. Marv will teach the new people how to produce the material the correct and professional way.

FEATURE: Okay, so you worked for Archie and Charlton and then moved to DC?

DEFALCO: I had never left Archie. Last year was the first year, since I got out of school and started earning money, that I've worked for one company exclusively. I worked entirely for Marvel and didn't do any outside things—and I feel very paranoid about that [laughter]. I was always working for Archie and several places. So I was working for Archie and Charlton, and I think around the time I was working for Charlton, I started working for DC, so that when Charlton stopped publication, I had DC. And while I was working for DC, I started doing some stuff for Marvel. I was also doing a lot of non-comic book work, which kept me very busy. I've always had that option.

FEATURE: Must be comforting.

DEFALCO: Yes. Working for Archie was always a problem when dealing with other comic book professionals because for the most part, they never considered Archie a legitimate company. At Archie I was the youngster of the organization. Everybody else had been in the business for thirty or forty years. These men were skilled Professionals with that capital P. They cared about their craft. They knew it real well and they also knew all the business angles of it. When I started with Archie, they were very rough on me because they taught me to be a professional at all times, on every level of handling the business. While it **is** a business. It's also a pleasure. Sometimes we professionals, who are stuck behind a typewriter for ten hours a day, tend to forget that we're doing something that we love. But even though we love it, we still have to support our spouses and children, and girlfriends, and boyfriends, and whatever combination we have [laughter]. When I first started working for DC and Marvel, I was horrified at the lack of professionalism. I mean, artists who lived from paycheck to paycheck and people walking around without medical insurance. I just couldn't conceive of it. People who had no idea what a deadline was. It seemed ironic because those same people considered us to be the unprofessionals!

FEATURE: Yeah, Archie is "that one over there on the rack we don't look at."

DEFALCO: Nobody cares about Archie. Archie could be made into a money-making proposition today. I don't think that the people currently in charge are familiar enough with today's marketplace to do that, but this is not to say that it can't be done. I am firmly convinced that there is a market for that type of material. All you've got to do is produce quality stuff and reach out to that market.

FEATURE: I'd certainly like to see that happen.

DEFALCO: I'd like to see it happen too. I'm bored with

the newsstands today. There is not enough diversity on a comic book rack and that bothers me. I think that's part of the reason why Jim Shooter hired me.

FEATURE: Well, you do seem to be involved with a lot of the non-super-hero stuff Marvel is putting out, a lot of the books that can be called "different books", whether it's **G.I. Joe** or **Team America**, or the **Annie** adaptation—which is decidedly not super-heroes. It seems to be that whenever it's not superheroes, Tom DeFalco is involved somewhere, much like it used to be that whenever there was a licensing project, Bill Mantlo seemed to write it.

DEFALCO: Well, that's not really true. The first issue of **Team America** that I'll really be editing will be #8, even though my name has appeared on the masthead earlier than that. I was in on **G.I. Joe** from the creation of the characters, but I don't consider myself to be a non-super-hero person...Louise Jones does **Ka-Zar**, that's not super-heroes.

FEATURE: It's still the action/adventure, and though he doesn't wear a costume, he goes up against what can be termed super-villains, and it's the action/adventure/fantasy setting. **G.I. Joe** is sort of a cross between a super-hero book and a war book, and I don't know—**Team America** might be considered a cross between a super-hero book and a cycle book...

DEFALCO: **Team America** is an adventure book, that's all. The closest thing to it is the old TV series, "I Spy". That's what we're going to do with that book. You'll see as much racecourse stuff in **Team America** as you used to see tennis in "I Spy". (Laughter)

FEATURE: The thing that I've been noticing similarities with **Team America** is "Speed Racer". In the first issue there's a mention of "Pops", the character in "Speed Racer" who designed the Mach Five—there's a character named Pops Takiguchi or Takanara or something, who designed these motorcycles. And with the mysterious Marauder or Racer X figure or whoever he is, there just seems to be a lot of "Speed Racer" in there. Have you ever seen much "Speed Racer"?

DEFALCO: No. I'm not familiar with it.

FEATURE: "Speed Racer" is a Japanese import like "Astro Boy" or "Prince Planet" or "Marine Boy" or one of those.

DEFALCO: I remember "Astro Boy" from when I was growing up. I used to like "Astro Boy", and there was another show that I liked even better. "Eighth Man", I think it was called.

FEATURE: "Tobor the Eight Man."

DEFALCO: "Tobor the Eighth Man." That was great! I loved it as a kid! I'd love to see repeats to see if it's still as good.

FEATURE: "Tobor" is one of the classic cult series that nobody seems to show anymore, but **everybody** remembers.

DEFALCO: I think kids today are being ripped of in terms of animations, and I don't mean just the limited form of animation. The TV people are under the gun too, in terms of economy, so I can understand scrimping on the amount of cels they're going to produce. That's their business. But I can't understand them scrimping on scripts. You pay the same amount for a good script as for a bad script, so you might as well get good scripts! I occasionally look at animation or read animation scripts, and I'm stunned with what's being shown. I've seen some stuff—what was the name of that show?—"Thundarr?"

FEATURE: "Thundarr The Barbarian" by Ruby Spears... Steve Gerber, Marty Pasko, Jack Kirby...

DEFALCO: Well, that explains why that one's good. (Laughter) I was going to say, that was the only one that seems to have any sort of story content and adventure. The other shows feature half-hour strips which I would reject as five-page Archie stories. Actually, I have the same comment for live television programs. Most twenty-two page comic books are better plotted than a half-hour or hour TV show.

FEATURE: That's been true of television for years. Getting back to comics...I'd like to get at how you perceive the editor-writer relationship, as long as you do both. What do you feel is a writer's responsibility to an editor, or...what do you feel a writer brings to comics?

DEFALCO: Hmm. To a given comic book story, a writer brings his craft, which is his ability to plot, to tell a story, to write dialogue...and he must also bring his talent, which is how well he uses these abilities. Anybody can tell a joke, but only certain people can make it funny. Also, the writer must bring his vision, which is how he views the world and how he subjectively judges the reaction of events upon characters. An editor brings more or less the same thing. Editors and writers should work as a team. I consider the production of a comic book to be a team effort. Every contributor is a member of the team. If anybody falls down, the comic comes out bad. If the letterer screws up, you have a lousy product. It's easy for a writer to have a vision for a single character. Editors need a wide-angle vision. They have to decide how this character affects the rest of the universe or if he even does. Gee, that sounds like a roundabout bullshit answer, that didn't really say anything (laughter).

FEATURE: "The writer does this, and the editor does the same thing, but different."

DEFALCO: Yes, that's more or less what it is. The main difference between a writer and an editor is in the actual work that is done. The writer walks in with a basic idea for a story—the way the story should be constructed. He presents it to the editor. The Editor gives the writer little suggestions on how to make the story better. The writer and the editor usually bounce ideas back and forth, and the story has the benefit of two imaginations. You keep sifting through the ideas until you get rid of all the silly ones. The writer goes home and does the actual herd work of putting these ideas together in the form of a plot. And **then** he does the actual agonizing work of writing the story. The plot comes back to the editor, and he can look at it with a colder eye, a more detached vision and see if the writer has fallen down or left any holes or didn't think to use any options that were available to him. The editor can make more suggestions at whatever stage the work is at. When it comes to scripting, it is the writer's agony again. The editor sits back after the job has been finished and says, "You know this line that you worked on for twelve hours?

PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR
SPIDER-MAN
YOU'VE KIDNAPPED THE WOMAN I LOVE ...YOU'VE DESTROYED EVERYTHING I HOLD DEAR!
AND I'LL MAKE YOU PAY!
FEATURING! A DECIDEDLY DIFFERENT SIDE OF J. JONAH JAMESON!

it doesn't quite fit the situation," [laughter] and gives it back to the writer. The editor has the easy job. He's the Monday morning quarterback. The writer is the man on the firing line. He does all the hard work, and all he hears is complaining from the editor, who's coaching on the sidelines, saying "Why did you drop that pass?" "Well, there were five guys hanging on me at the time." [Laughter] "That's not an excuse."

FEATURE: Okay. Then what makes a good artist?

DEFALCO: Good artist? The ability to draw and to express your vision of the world on paper. What makes a good comic book artist is the ability to tell a story. This is something a lot of the new guys coming up have forgotten. Comic books are not portfolios. They're not a series of pretty pictures. If that's what the audience wants, they will go out and buy portfolios. They can get better reproduction and better pictures in portfolios. They're buying comic books for the story. And that's just not the writing. The story. That's why a guy like Jack Kirby in his prime was the greatest. You could drop all the copy from the Jack Kirby comics—you could look only at those pictures—you knew what the story was. A guy at **Archie Comics**, Sam Schwartz—you could look at all of his pictures without any of the word balloons, and you would laugh because it was a great funny story. And the jokes added to it made it twice as funny. That's the marriage of writer and artist. Y'know, draftsmanship and that sort of stuff is important, and so is style and vision—I keep coming back to vision. We're doing a **Vision and Scarlet Witch** mini-series and this is my way of plugging it [laughter]. Actually, what I look for in an artist is someone who can tell a story, who can draw reasonably well—people look like people, cars look like cars, that sort of stuff—and plus, only draws like himself.

Herb Trimpe is a good artist because nobody draws like Herb. Mike Golden is in a class by himself. Frank Miller is doing things that nobody else is doing, which is why Frank Miller's great. I'd say two or three years from now, you're going to see a bunch of Frank Miller clones coming up, who'll steal his panel layouts and steal his way of drawing and stuff like that. All they'll always be are clones. They'll never progress. Which is why so many of the Neal Adams clones have either developed their own styles or have disappeared.

FEATURE: Okay, we can go on to inkers.

DEFALCO: Inkers? What makes a good inker?

FEATURE: Yeah, there seem to be two schools of inkers these days, which not making any value judgements, I'll just call the old school and the new school. The new school could be called embellishers, certainly Bob Layton and Tom Palmer and Klaus Janson and Joe Rubinstein. Their styles are there and very clear and very obvious. And there are people like Joe Sinnott and Mike Esposito and Frank Giacoia and Dick Giordano, where the artist underneath really comes through. Maybe that'll spark off some comments.

DEFALCO: I am very hazy on the subject of inking. I know writing...well, people may disagree with that [laughter], and I recognize good storytelling, but

"I'd say two or three years from now, you're going to see a bunch of Frank Miller clones coming up, Who'll steal his panel layouts and steal his way of drawing... All they'll always be are clones."

inking—anytime I have a question on inking, I run down the hall to Al Milgrom, who's one of the best inkers in the business. He explains everything about inking to me. I feel bad when people bring up inking samples and end up speaking to me. There's nothing I can tell them. I can only look at it and see if it's a good crisp line, but I can't tell them what they're doing wrong.

FEATURE: Okay, let's go on to a subject that you probably know quite a bit about. Spider-Man.

As editor of Spider-Man, one thing that's notable about your Spider-Man books is that they're ahead of schedule, which seems to be a real distinction in the comics field. I've been told that Carol Kalish [Marvel's Direct Sales Manager], when she's putting together the "Coming Attractions" to tell the dealers what's coming up—some editors will tell her "I don't know what's coming up two months from now", and you'll say "Gee, I'm not sure I can tell you that, that book's out at the inker." [Laughter]

DEFALCO: Well, I don't know what to comment. Nothing is really ahead of schedule because we deal in long-range dates, but...I'm a very lazy guy, and I hate to work. I especially hate to work at the office. At Archie, I was not there full-time. I was only there a couple of days a week. Since I don't like to be around the office, I organize everything so that the work is constantly flowing. None of it is ever at the office. It's always at the scripter, inker, colorist or whomever. When work comes in, it goes right out. Because if it's not in the office, I don't have to be there either. If you let something go until the last minute, you have to do a lot of extra work to get it out on time. So since I'm exceptionally lazy when they give me three months to get a book out, I take all three months.

FEATURE: The first thing I noticed, when you took over the Spider-Man books as editor, was all of a sudden, all the characters were introduced at the beginning of every story. The first few pages, you'd find out who they are, what their powers are, what their personality is...was this something you consciously worked on, when you took over the books, or is this something you just do all the time?

DEFALCO: I don't know if I do it all the time. I'll have to read some of my material. Around the time that I came in, Jim Shooter was trying to re-organize Marvel, and one of Jim's major criteria is that characters are introduced properly. I used to work on Archie stuff, where you had five pages and in those five pages you had to introduce your characters, introduce your conflict, build it to a crisis, solve it and have your denouement, plus have many jokes. So I learned how to get the characterization set up in the beginning. When I started editing, I discussed character introduction with my writers and since they are all brilliant, they do it properly. At this stage, I don't know if it is conscious or not.

FEATURE: This brings to mind the second issue of **Dazzler**, where you had like twenty-five characters to introduce in two pages or something like that. All of them got one line of dialogue, and that line told you what their powers were and what their personality was, and what their name was—or rather, other characters would fill in

each others' nemes—but The X-Men, The Avengers, The Fantastic Four—they were all introduced...

DEFALCO: [laughing] Did I really do that?

FEATURE: Oh, yeah. That's one of the reasons I like to reread that issue because there you have twenty-five characters and there they are.

DEFALCO: A lot of my understanding of the Marvel characters comes from Jim Shooter. The fan press make him out to be a monster, but he's a pussycat. Jim Shooter is probably a genius. He's got the greatest understanding of what we do that I have ever come across. I used to think that I was good, and that I knew what we were doing. Then, I met Jim Shooter. I'm a rank amateur in comparison. In comic books. I can beat him in other media. [Laughter] I think **Dazzler** was the first regular feature I did for Marvel. Jim sat down with me and gave me handles on all of the characters, and I just used a lot of his handles. I disagree with him on some characters, but for the most part, this guy's got 'em. It's amazing. He's got all the characters in the entire Marvel Universe memorized. He can tell you what each one of them would have for breakfast. Captain America would have Wheaties...

FEATURE: Who could disagree with that? [Laughter]

DEFALCO: Yes, of course he has Wheaties for breakfast. When I started writing **Two-In-One**, I thought, "What does Ben Grimm have for breakfast?" It's obvious. The guy gets up and he fries himself a hamburger. Maybe he'll occasionally have a bacon and egg sandwich on a roll. But usually he gets up, has a hamburger, a cup of coffee, and then waits 'till the afternoon, when he has a hero sandwich. You don't want this to be the Jim Shooter memorial tape, so you'll have to edit all this stuff out.

FEATURE: Memorial? We'll have to kill him to do that. [Laughter]

Rather than talking about **Spider-Man**, we seem to have started talking about **Dazzler** and **Marvel Two-In-One**, but we were going to get to that, so we might as well just continue. **Dazzler** again seemed to me to reflect the fact that you have had a broad amount of experience with other kinds of comics, aside from the super-hero comics. **Dazzler** was a comic book that could slip into the super-hero mold fairly easily, but it didn't. Alison Blaire's concerns were more personal concerns, and she **would** get involved in the various adventures, but she still hasn't made that commitment that "I'm going to go out and save the world every other Wednesday." The focus of the stories is always on something else other than the fight.

DEFALCO: We wanted to do something totally off-beat and away from the normal run-of-the-mill stuff. It's a funny thing in this business...one of the biggest criticisms constantly levelled at Marvel is that everything from Marvel is the same, that Marvel produces one package. And yet, any time Marvel tries to do anything just a little off-beat, we get static. The whole Dazzler shtick is nothing like any other comic book being produced, and it was consciously set up that way. Boy, did we get a lot of flak! The readers wanted to know why she doesn't

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THIS ONE'S AN INHUMANS
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WEB-HEAD, YOU'VE TRAVELED WITH HIS CHILD TOO OFTEN! THIS IS YOUR DOING, TOO!
...SHATTERED BY THE SHOCKER!
© 1982 Marvel Comics Group
HE'S RIGHT! I'VE GOT TO TAKE CHARGE AND SOLVE THIS MYSTERY!
THE VULTURE'S BACK!...DEADLIER THAN EVER!
"LET FLY THESE AGED WINGS!"
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regularly go out and fight crooks—why she isn't a standard super-heroine. We saw Dazzler as a sweet girl—the kind of person that you would really meet next door. She was a self-aware person, but she was not a jock, she was not a blatant Women's Libber, she was not a shrinking violet, she was just...real. Boy, did we catch flak. And we still get letters about "why don't we make her like Phoenix", and why don't we fit her into all the stereotypes. Sorry, guys. In terms of house style, anybody who can see any similarities between Sal Buscema, Herb Trimpe, Frank Miller, Al Milgrom and Ed Hannigan...can point 'em out to me because I sure can't.

FEATURE: When you've got such diverse people as Frank Miller and Sal Buscema in the list, it would get difficult.

DEFALCO: At one time, there was a Marvel house style, but...

FEATURE: ...that's because Jack Kirby was drawing everything.

DEFALCO: Exactly. When one guy is laying out all of your books, they tend to look the same. When one guy's writing all those books, they tend to sound the same. Marc DeMatteis, who I think is a heck of a writer—has a style which is completely at odds with my own. His concerns are not my concerns. There's thematically nothing similar about our styles. Roger Stern—I don't see any similarity between what he does and what I do. I think it's very strange that we're all lumped in together. "Oh, you guys are all the house style."

FEATURE: Okay. I have heard **Marvel Two-in-One** described as a new **Strange Tales**, and I can see reasons for that. The way you seem to be treating the strip, it has a lot of the same atmosphere that the old **Strange Tales** book did, with the Torch and the Thing.

DEFALCO: I don't remember what that attitude was. If it was a light, happy-go-lucky thing...

FEATURE: Yes. The Torch and The Thing would meet the Beatles, or the Torch and the Thing would be hanging around headquarters, squabbling, and Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch would come in to see if they could hide from Magneto, and the heroes would say "We saw you on television—we're going to beat you up!" It was definitely a lighter book than **The Fantastic Four** because **The Fantastic Four** had the real character concerns going on. In **Strange Tales**, nothing really earth-shattering could happen to the characters because stuff like that had to be in **The Fantastic Four**. With **Two-In-One**, you seem to be dealing with a character who is essentially controlled by John Byrne, and you have to keep in step with what Byrne's doing. Correct me if I'm wrong—that's just the way it seems that **Marvel Two-In-One** is a light-hearted book, where the adventures are more **up**, more pure entertainment than **The Fantastic Four**, which might get into heavier themes.

DEFALCO: I think I disagree with a lot of that. There's a slight problem...I'm more or less ended with **Two-In-One**. I'm going to be giving up the writing end of it for assorted reasons. One of which I've recently been given it to edit—and I don't like the concept of writer/editors. It's true that up until this point, no real developments were allowed to happen to the Thing in **Two-In-One**. Due

to the editor at the time, Jim Salicrup, **Two-In-One** was more or less kept separate from **The Fantastic Four**. In a **Two-In-One** story, the Thing became mutated, and his whole physical appearance was changed.

FEATURE: That was the "Virus X" storyline.

DEFALCO: You know this stuff!

FEATURE: I follow your writing. I enjoy it.

DEFALCO: Oh, okay. Well, the following month in **The Fantastic Four**, he was mutated to look the same way for a different reason. I didn't even know about that storyline in **The Fantastic Four**. I was planning to carry the mutated storyline over for two issues in mine, but the editor said "No, no, tie it up in one issue." He never told me why. The next month, I saw **The Fantastic Four**. At the time, the change was only supposed to be for two issues, so we never brought it over to **Two-In-One**. It ended up lasting about a year or so. We got a lot of hate mail asking why the Thing is different in both books, but...it was an editorial decision at the time, which I had nothing to say about. In terms of the lighter attitude in **Two-In-One**, as opposed to **Fantastic Four**, that could just be my own attitude. I tend to have a lighter attitude towards the material. My primary reason for writing a comic book is the entertainment value. I'm here with my typewriter, to put on a little show. I'm not trying to give you heavy messages or moral interpretaions of existence because I don't have my doctorate in philosophy yet. Most of the good ideas I have about the existence of humanity and their place in the universe, I have gotten through other sources. I don't think it's really our job here to teach. I think it's our job sometimes to expose people to different ideas, but not to teach or propagandize in any one direction. I'm looking to have fun with the characters. Ben Grimm is a charac-

ter that you can have a lot of fun with, and I did. I think some of the stories got kind of serious. I thought the Thing and the Blue Diamond story and the Man-Thing story, and the whole thing with Giant-Man tended to get very heavy. A little heavier than what I'm interested in, but...I never considered **Two-In-One** a second-rate book. Did I bypass another question?

FEATURE: No. This is what the interview's for.

DEFALCO: I think I was a lot more experimental when I started on **Two-In-One**. I have a tendency to get bored with things after a while, so I try to experiment, to expand my own mind. The Thing with the Man-Thing story, in which we have two separate stories going on at once ...that story was a very important story to me because that story totally expresses the character of Ben Grimm. This is a jock, y'know? In a sense, I've recently ripped that story off, for this year's **Two-In-One Annual**...

FEATURE: ...which was a lot of fun.

DEFALCO: ...which again, was this character story about Ben Grimm. He's got a lot of strength and a lot of power, but the main thing that sets Ben Grimm apart from everyone else is his personality and his blatant courage. You'll notice in the **Two-In-One** that most of his guest-stars were people who were stronger than he is, and yet Ben always came out on top because I think he's one of the best characters Marvel has. I'd say he's the second best character that Marvel has right now.

FEATURE: After whom?

DEFALCO: Captain America. Captain America is the ultimate hero to me. He is the greatest.

FEATURE: I have to agree with you there. He is **the** super-hero.

"On a dollar-for-dollar bet, I would stack my money on Captain America against anybody."

DEFALCO: Here's something that Jim Shooter once pointed out to me. The first time we see Captain America in **The Avengers #4**—he's coming back after he's been frozen in the ice cube—he meets the Sub-Mariner. There's a panel where The Sub-Mariner holds Captain America upside down over his shoulder—here's a man, he's hanging by his foot, upside down, the Sub-Mariner's got him, about to dash him against the rocks, and his thought balloon is, "He's stronger and faster than I am, but I'll find a way to outmaneuver him." Wow! Jesus Christ, this guy is wonderful! One of the strongest creatures on Earth has him in total control, but he's going to find a way to outmaneuver him. And I know that if there had been another panel there—I mean, in the actual story, the Earth blew up or something [laughter]—but if there had been another panel there, Captain America would have gotten out. On a dollar for dollar bet, I would stack my money on Captain America against anybody. Including Galactus. Because Captain America could figure a way...he'd find a way to beat Galactus. My idea of a Captain America story is...you start on page one, he's hanging upside down from a burning rope over a ravine, and there are 10,000 soldiers coming at him all with machine guns and laser rifles, and he's holding a girl, and on the next page, page two, after he's solved all that, he gets into the real trouble of the story [laughter].

FEATURE: Okay, so you are leaving **Two-In-One**. Are you going to be picking up anything else as a writer?

DEFALCO: I don't think so, at this stage of the game. I had originally planned to take the summer off, not do any work from June to August, and just get some personal things out of the way. I'm writing an extra issue of **Two-In-One** that I didn't want to, a very silly issue. I want to do some other media stuff for a while, just to remind myself that I can still do it. But if the right feature comes open...I'm a sucker. I can easily be seduced. If they tell me I can now do a **Machine Man** mini-series, I'll jump at the chance. If **Captain America** comes open, or **Sub-Mariner**, I'll do it...but right now I have no plans. I'm really not concerned because I can always find something to do.

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YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING, PETER... I AM!!
THIS IS IT!! THE CLIMAX OF THE MOST SENSATIONAL SPIDEY SAGA OF ALL!!

FEATURE: So what's in this silly issue of **Two-In-One**?

DEFALCO: It picks up from this year's Annual with The Champion. Ben Grimm is in the hospital, just relaxing and being checked out. And he's bored silly. A lot of second-rate villains realize that this is their chance to get revenge or to make a name for themselves by killing Ben Grimm when he's at his most helpless state. So about a hundred or so super-villains come out of the woodwork to kill Ben Grimm. But what they seem to forget is that some assorted super-heroes would naturally stop by to visit Ben. So all the super-heroes fight all the super-villains, and stop them from getting anywhere near Ben—but Ben is in his hospital room, bored silly, waiting for something to happen. It's an all-boredom issue for Ben, but hopefully not for the reader.

FEATURE: Put a caption on the cover: All-Boredom Issue! (Laughter)

DEFALCO: Right. It'll have all sorts of guest stars, and villains and a lot of straight super-hero stuff, but done in my kind of tongue-in-cheek way. I don't know if that's popular or what, the mail goes back and forth when I do silly things. Some people like it, some people don't. I know the sales on the book have been increasing.

FEATURE: That's good.

DEFALCO: One super-villain actually reaches Ben, and it happens to be the super-villain that everybody has been writing to me to say, "Bring this guy back." I brought him back and people can see him. I'm not going to tell you who because that would destroy the end of the story. I don't know if this interview will come out after the story...but the ending is the best part for me. I hope somebody else likes it.

FEATURE: I'll be looking forward to it. Okay, moving back to Spider-Man again...the situation that the Spider-Man books seemed to be in before you took them over, was that there seemed to be three different Spider-Mans. There was the Amazing Spider-Man, who had his Marv Wolfman concerns, and there was the Spectacular Spider-Man with his Bill Mantlo concerns, but they didn't seem to overlap, and then there was the Marvel Team-Up Spider-Man, who didn't seem to have any connection with any of the other two. With you editing the books, they all seem to be the same character. The books seem to have different atmospheres and show different facets of the character, but you can tell that it's the same guy.

DEFALCO: When I took over and got a chance to organize it, I set up the creative teams, Roger Stern on Amazing, Bill Mantlo on Spectacular, and Marc DeMatteis on Team-Up. We had this one afternoon session that started at lunchtime, and ended around the end of the day, and we all discussed "Who is Spider-Man to us?" We just went through "what is the magic of Spider-Man?" because each of us had grown up with the character, each of us had a certain affection for him, and we tried to figure out all the wonderful things we liked about the character. And we worked out a consistent character. I think I forgot to mention Mark Gruenwald, who was my assistant at the time, and who is now an editor. He will soon be Marvel's best editor, and then you'll be interviewing him (laughter). Anyway, we had a big coordination meeting to set the character straight in our own minds, and we did it. To keep the character consistent, I've tried a number of systems to keep everybody well aware of what's going on. Everybody reads each other's material at the point it's being written. When a plot comes in from any one of the writers, the other two get copies immediately. They usually read their copies before I get a chance to read mine. When the scripted art comes in, as soon as the book is in a presentable form, everybody gets copies of the stuff immediately. At any given point, everybody knows what everybody else is doing. In a coming month, I don't know which month, at this stage of the game, a major character is coming back into Spider-Man's life. It's a woman, and she appears that month in one panel of **Amazing**, watching Spider-Man going across the city. In **Team-Up**, there's one panel of her watching Spider-Man going across the neighborhood, and then in **Spectacular**, on the last page of the book, Spider-Man sees her, and says, "I didn't even know you were in town!" But the readers who have read **Amazing** and **Team-Up**, will know. She's going to be in silhouette, but we're not playing it that close to the chest. If they can't figure out who she is—well, tell me if you figure out who she is.

FEATURE: I'll do that.

DEFALCO: We can only do that because everybody knows what everybody else is doing. I got the impression that there were problems co-ordinating the books in the past because one editor was doing one thing and one editor was doing another. But now, a single editor is in charge of making sure that everybody gets the information. We're dealing with three professional writers. Three guys who really care about what they're doing. All three of them are totally committed to their part of it. These guys break their backs to co-ordinate, and they are so nice to each other and so nice to me, it's sickening. Also, they're three talented professionals. The books have slightly different atmospheres because you are dealing with three individual creators—and then, of course, there are the pencillers. Pencillers make an immense difference. The penciller is the actual storyteller. They do fabulous work. Ed Hannigan, John Romita Jr. and Kerry Gammill—these guys are great. Al Milgrom—I've always been an Al Milgrom fan, which is embarrassing, 'cause I constantly feel I should walk into his office and ask for an autograph [laughter]—has just started turning in pencils on Spectacular Spider-Man and **man**, this guy's good. They're all good—they're good in different ways.

FEATURE: What I've noticed in terms of personality is that **Amazing Spider-Man** seems to be very action-oriented. **Spectacular Spider-Man** is more of a tangible plot where characters are coming into conflict in odd ways, and with the **Marvel Team-Up** book, you very seldom see Peter Parker, other than "Well, this is Peter Parker and here he is and this is the story springboard." **Marvel Team-Up** seems to be the book where the guest-star or something else carries the story, and Spider-Man's particular personal concerns don't appear that much.

DEFALCO: I don't know about that. I'd say for the longest time **Marvel Team-Up** was like that, but now it's changed. We just had a very major development in Spider-Man's life, in Aunt May's life, happen in **Marvel Team-Up**. I think this is the first time it's ever been done. Aunt May and her group moved out to a new world, into a new...

FEATURE: Oh, they do the moving out in **Team-Up**? I'd thought the idea was first presented in **Spectacular**.

DEFALCO: It was first presented in **Spectacular**, it was discussed in **Amazing**, and it happened in **Team-Up**. They're all connected. To get a good view of what's happening in Spider-Man's life, you have to read all three books. You can read any one book by itself—the webs are not so tangled that if you only read **Spectacular**, you're not going to know what's going on because you haven't read the other two—but you only get the **full** picture by reading all three. Major developments are happening in **Team-Up** now because I don't want a second-rate Spider-Man book. When I first came in, **Amazing** was **the** title, and **Spectacular** was the second title. It was the "A" book and the "B" book. Why even publish a "B" book? We're Marvel Comics! If we wanted to publish "B" books, we could work someplace else, and do "B" books. Marvel Comics only publishes "A" books. I spoke to Bill Mantlo and said, "I want all of them to be just as good." Bill said, "Great!" and Bill Mantlo busted his back to make sure there's no difference between the titles. At this stage of the game the stories are interchangeable. **Marvel Team-Up** is an "A" book. Marc DeMatteis is doing some real fabulous things with that book. He's touching on terrific themes and really getting into people's heads. He's done some real touching stories about the old people in the nursing home. The guest-stars do play a big part, but the stories are about how the guest-stars affect the people...

FEATURE: Of course, there was—what was it, two issues ago?—The one where Spider-Man and his guest-star, The Human Torch sort of stood around talking or fighting, while the whole story went on with The Leap-Frog and his son. I really enjoyed seeing The Leap-Frog again. He has long been one of my favorite villains.

DEFALCO: That **Team-Up** with The Human Torch was my idea of a real good comic book because it had everything. It had the pathos, it had the plot, it had the super-hero action, it had the characterization—it had it all. And it wasn't two separate stories, because of Spider-Man and The Human Torch, their feelings about

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having grown old, and losing enthusiasm and stuff is mirrored on the other side.

FEATURE: Yes, the story-lines were certainly tied together, and they were also heavily tied together by the fact that the burglars that Spider-Man and The Torch captured were the ones who brought the Leap-Frog into it in the first place, and The Speed Demon was all over town, connecting everything together.

DEFALCO: The quality of stories in comics today is so much higher than it ever was before. We're very concerned about plot construction, themes, cross-themes, and stuff. We've all read our William Faulkner [laughter]. I shouldn't say Faulkner because that dates me.

FEATURES: I don't know. I'm just out of school, and I've read plenty of Faulkner.

DEFALCO: I'm very happy with the way the Spider-Man books are going. I think there's a method to Shooter's—I was going to say Shooter's madness, but he's got a bad enough rep already. Anway, Shooter runs

down the hallway and says "Which book do you like?" and an editor will say "I like these ones," and he'll say "Well, which books don't you like?" and then invariably, those are the books we're all given to edit. Because we all dislike different books. Then we make them into books that we do like, that we enjoy reading, and then we've got a good book...

FEATURE: Just talking to people involved in comics at any level—the books that people seem to really dislike are never the ones they feel are just losers, that there's nothing good about. It's always the ones that they think **could** be so good, if it were only done right. If someone doesn't like a book, they usually have ideas as to how it could be fixed.

DEFALCO: Currently, my biggest thrill is **Ghost Rider.**

FEATURE: Okay, why is your biggest thrill **Ghost Rider**? I can ask that since it's a book I've never been excited about.

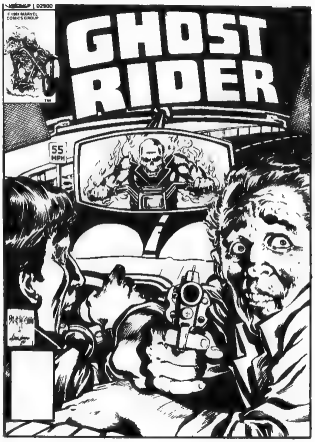
DEFALCO: That's exactly it.

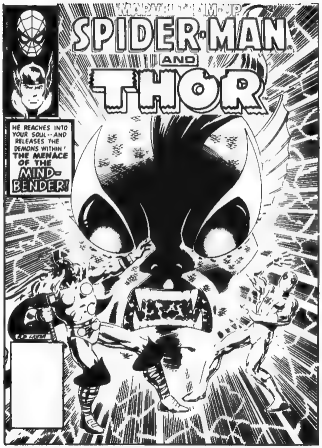
FEATURE: I've been following it recently because of Roger Stern, but...

DEFALCO: Isn't it suddenly interesting?

FEATURE: Well, I can't say whether or not it's interesting **suddenly** because I don't know how interesting it was before.

DEFALCO: A lot of people are beginning to pick up **Ghost Rider** for the first time. Right now it's a book that I look forward to, and it's a book that the people in the Marvel office are looking forward to. When the people in the office start looking forward to a book, we





know we have a hit. A year from now, **Ghost Rider** could be our next X-Men. For collectors, we re-did the origin, I don't know whether it's #88 or #89, "The Terrible Curse of Johnny Blaze." That will command prices like **X-Men** #94 does, in five or ten years. All my office copies have disappeared, 'cause all our creative people want copies of that book.

FEATURE: I'll have to save my copy...

DEFALCO: Nobody ever cared too much about **Ghost Rider**. Among the professionals, everybody used to say, "Well, it's got potential, but nobody's doing it right." I read a couple of issues years and years ago, the early issues. Mike Ploog did them, and he did great art, but nothing about the stories interested me. The book just never seemed to come together. I was very lucky. I managed to get an upcoming penciller, Bob Budiansky—he can draw, he can tell a story, and he does all the things fans like. He puts in all the details and he is the kind of guy who has the real potential to become a fan favorite artist. Dave Simons is doing the inking, and has been doing a fabulous job on the book. Roger Stern started writing it, and Roger and I had long talks about the character, and it started coming together. Roger has now left the book, to go and do **The Avengers**, and I can respect his reasons why. He has been replaced by Marc DeMatteis, who is totally committed to **Ghost Rider**, and has been doing some great stuff. I love what Marc is doing on **Marvel Team-Up**, and I really like what he's doing on **Ghost Rider**.

FEATURE: Okay. Why?

DEFALCO: Ghost Rider is a character with a real con-

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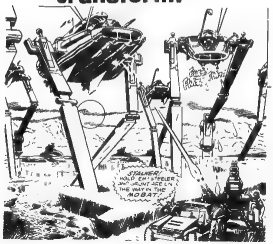
"Johnny Blaze is a likeable guy, caught up in a situation he can't control. Becoming the Ghost Rider is the worst thing in the world for him. He would rather die than transform."



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flict. Johnny Blaze is a likeable guy, caught up in a situation he can't control. Becoming the Ghost Rider is the worst thing in the world for him. He would rather die than transform. When he transforms, he feels the skin burning off his body. The Ghost Rider is the meanest creature this world has ever seen. This is a creature totally devoid of mercy. If there is a girl hanging over a cliff, and some bad guys fight—Johnny Blaze becomes Ghost Rider, hoping that Ghost Rider will go up and save the girl. But the way we're playing it now, Ghost Rider would have his vengeance on the bad guys, and go away. The heck with the girl.

FEATURE: The girl's still hanging there, "Hey, what about me?"

DEFALCO: "you're not my concern. I don't care about the innocent." In a recent story, there's a friend of Johnny Blaze's trapped in a burning tent...

FEATURE: Corky's father...

DEFALCO: Yes, and Johnny goes in there to help Corky's father. He realizes he's trapped by the flame. He's holding the man, thinking, "Maybe if I become the Ghost Rider, he'll help." He becomes the Ghost Rider, so Ghost Rider is holding the guy, and says, "What the hell do I care about this guy," and flings him. Luckily, he flung him out of the tent, but he could have just as easily flung him in a different direction. He didn't care about Corky's father. I'm sure that bouncing out of the tent did the old man just as much harm as the smoke. The next time you see Corky's father, he's in the hospital with broken bones. We have to assume that Ghost Rider did a certain amount of damage. There's an atmosphere to the book. There's mood. We can do different types of stories. I think we'd been working on six issues before we finally brought in some super-villains. And we're going to be introducing some new types of villains.

FEATURE: There was a very striking cover on that second Circus of Crime issue. The circus poster cover?

DEFALCO: With the head of Ghost Rider burning through the poster?

FEATURE: Yeah.

DEFALCO: That cover...we experimented, and we experimented, and I don't think that cover came out as well as it could have come out. It was the best that I could get from it, but it didn't work. I don't know if anybody's noticed, but I try to do different things with the covers. Sometimes the experiments work. We had a **Spectacular Spider-Man** with all different signs and stuff. That experiment worked, and we were all happy. Then we have other experiments...The **G. I. Joe** with the faded flag in the background. We try a lot of different things. Some things work, and they look great. Some things don't work, and they don't look too good. We have a Spider-Man painting that Ed Hannigan did. I don't know what that's going to look like. Sometimes the covers don't look as good as they can, but it's not through lack of trying. When you experiment, you're bound to have a couple of bombs. I don't know...I wonder how the people feel outside. I wonder if they want us to continue to experiment or what.

FEATURE: I think they want you to experiment, but they want you to be right all the time.

DEFALCO: Well, we keep trying. For the most part, I'm very happy with the covers that come out. The **Ghost Rider** with Steel Wind on the cover, I think that's #75—that's a striking cover.

FEATURE: Yes, I've been noticing it on your wall there. I've noticed in **Ghost Rider** that Johnny Blaze is taking up more and more of the issues, and the Ghost Rider might not appear until the second to last page.

DEFALCO: I don't feel bound by an restrictions in terms of story content. I don't think there are any rules in terms of telling a story. This is another thing that Jim Shooter is great about. He doesn't have any rules in terms of fight scenes, or characterizations or stuff, as long as it's a good story. That's his only criteria, and that's my only criteria. I can do issues of **Ghost Rider** in which Ghost Rider doesn't appear. I can do issues of **Spider-Man** in which he never puts on the costume. And yet, I would still demand that you know who Spider-Man is by the time you finish with that issue. I wrote an issue of **Two-In-One** in which there was...

FEATURE: "It's Miller Time." The Thing and the Sandman.

DEFALCO: It's Miller Time—and that's the whole story. They sat around drinking beer for the whole issue. I set it up to be the standard Marvel fight. The guy is sitting at the bar, and The Thing walks in, and he picks up the chair and he says, "Oh, Jesus, are we going to waste time fighting?" and they say, "No, why should we?" and put the chair down and sit down and have a beer. It's not a great story, but I thought it was an entertaining piece.

FEATURE: I've been waiting to see The Sandman since, to find out what happens next, because that left The Sandman in a very interesting spot, just as that **Team-Up** left the Leap-Frog in a very interesting spot. We now have one of the most ridiculous-looking, incompetent super-heroes ever created. Does this mean we'll never see The Leap-Frog again?

DEFALCO: The Leap-Frog is coming back...let's see, #125 is Tigra, #126 is a double issue which has Spider-Man and The Hulk in one story, and Son of Satan and Luke Cage in another. Also the Tigra story has a back-up story with The Scarlet Witch and Dr. Strange. Issue #127 is Spider-Man and The Watcher, our special Christmas issue—I told you, we try to do some interesting things...

FEATURE: I'll say.

DEFALCO: ...and possibly, the issue after that might be Spider-Man and the Leap-Frog.

FEATURE: I'll look forward to it.

DEFALCO: Or Spider-Man and Frog-Man, I forget what we called him. Whatever. We try to do some interesting things.

Okay, you have any other questions?

FEATURE: Let's see, what else are you editing? **Marvel Tales**. Oh, that Ditko fellow. He's a real up-and-comer, you should use more of him [laughter].

DEFALCO: Well, if you're going to reprint stuff, reprint the best.

FEATURE: Yeah. I know people who say the best comic

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book out each month is **Marvel Tales**.

DEFALCO: That's something I'd like to comment on. I've often heard, from a number of people, that comics today are not as good as when they were growing up, when they were kids. I strongly take issue with that. The standards in comics today are much higher. The stories are much better plotted, much better written. The art, the draftsmanship, everything is of higher quality. Sometimes our storytelling isn't as good as it could be—but we're working on it. I think Jack Kirby was the best storyteller this business has ever seen. And matching against the best, gee, everybody falls down a little bit. But overall, I think comic books today are so much better than they ever were, at any other point in history. Pick out any year, any given month, and look at all the comic books produced in that period. Pick out any current month, and look at all the comic books, and you'll find that you enjoy a lot more of today's books, percentage-wise, than ever before. Right now there are so many more books worth reading.

FEATURE: Okay, well, switching from one of Marvel's oldest books to some of the newer ones, we haven't said much about **G.I. Joe** or **Team America**. So, why should the comic book fan out on the street pick up **Team America**? What makes it good?

DEFALCO: We have some very interesting plans for the book. We're restructuring the team. We're going to take them away from the Secret Service stuff. The race track will always be their starting point, but we're going to do a real team book, and explore what it means to be a member of a team, and a family. A lot of interesting things will be happening. **Team America** will be our version of Hill Street Blues. No super-hero action to speak of. It'll be something totally different. We might even cancel the **Team America** title, restructure the group, and come out with a new title. People looking for something new and different—give it a try. **G.I. Joe**...I edited the first five issues. After that, it's going to Denny O'Neil. Again, this is a book unlike anything that's out there. Unlike anything that's ever been produced. An assault team set in the world of today. **G.I. Joe** is "Mission: Impossible" if it were real. If the "Mission: Impossible" team really existed, they would be working for the military. There's no way it would be a separate agency. **G.I. JOE** is a team of specialists trying to protect the world from terrorists. That's it. We get a lot of flak about doing toy books. Whenever anyone hears that we're doing a toy book, people in the fan press go wild. "Another Marvel toy book. Boy, it's bound to stink." Two of our toy books, **Rom** and **The Micronauts**, have outlasted the toys and are very, very popular books. The fans claim they hate toy books and yet they buy an awful lot of them. Maybe they buy them because they hate them so much they want to get them off the newsstands. [Laughter]

FEATURE: Wrong strategy.

DEFALCO: Well, **Micronauts** is a very popular book, and **Rom** is one of our best-selling books. As I understand it, the **Rom** toy died immediately. It never went anywhere.

FEATURE: The comic book was well done to begin with, and about the beginning of the second year, it just took off, and it's been doing terrific stuff ever since.

DEFALCO: I think **G.I. Joe** is a well-crafted book. Larry Herne does his research, and is producing some real gut-level stories. They have a lot of feeling, a lot of power. It's a book that I'm going to continue to read after I give up editing it. It has my interest.

FEATURE: Okay. The one book on this wall that we haven't done any talking about is, I think, **The Fantastic Four**.

DEFALCO: **The Fantastic Four**—I was just given it. I haven't had any input yet. It'll probably be #252 or #253 before any so-called DeFalco influence will come in to play.

FEATURE: The last I heard, you were given **The Fantastic Four** and **Marvel Two-In-One** on a sort of caretaker's basis, until they figured out what to do with Jim Salicrup's books. Do you have them on a permanent basis now?

DEFALCO: Yes, I'm going to have them on a permanent basis. I'm going to make sure that **Two-In-One** and **Fantastic Four** will be co-ordinated, for what it's worth. I'm going to have John Byrne write them both. Jim Salicrup had arranged that, so I don't want to come across as a big genius for having done this. I don't want to take credit for Salicrup's brilliance. John Byrne will write them both, so they'll be co-ordinated with each other. We're going to make a significant change with **Two-In-One**, in terms of direction. Any major developments in the Thing's life will henceforth occur only in **Two-In-One**.

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FEATURE: That **is** a big change.

DEFALCO: Yes, we're going to do it right. It's the Thing's book, and we're going to make it that way.

FEATURE: Is Byrne planning to draw **Two-In-One** as well or is he just going to write it?

DEFALCO: At this stage, he's just going to be writing it. I think Ron Wilson has been doing a heck of a job on **Two-In-One**. I happen to be a real Ron Wilson fan. He'll probably continue to work on it, unless for some reason Ron decides to do something else. But if it were up to me, I would let Ron do it forever. If Ron wants to do it forever, he'll do it forever. I don't know how long John Byrne will want to do **The Fantastic Four**. From my discussions with him, I would suspect forever. It wouldn't be a bad idea. John brings a lot of enthusiasm to the work. He also brings in a good artist and he has a nice handle on dialogue. I'm looking forward to plotting with him.

FEATURE: As editor of the figurehead character of the best-selling comics line currently, where do you think the future of comics is? What directions do you see comics going in?

DEFALCO: I haven't the slightest idea.

FEATURE: An honest answer.

DEFALCO: We are experimenting with maybe four or five different formats. I mean the total look of the package. Nobody on the outside, not even other companies, have any idea of how we're experimenting. Any one of these new formats could be the comics of the future. I would refer to the Graphic Novels as a different type of package, just like the **Fanfare** and **G.I. Joe** formats. We have Graphic novels, **Fanfare**, **G.I. Joe**, the regular comics, the currently accepted digest size, what's that, five different packages?

FEATURE: There's also **Epic Illustrated**.

DEFALCO: With **Epic Illustrated**, we currently have six different packages. We've got five others in the works. I don't know which one's going to be popular ten years from now. I know we're going to do a lot more in the **G.I. Joe** format, on the Baxter stock. We're also going to be doing a lot more things in the **Fanfare** style. I think the Epic Comics line is going to be printed in two different formats. It's at the creator's option. Geez, there's so many things to play with now, who the heck knows? If you know, tell **me**, and then I'll put my money into that phase of the operation. In terms of the medium itself, I think it will always be with us. I think in ten years, children's textbooks will be told in comics format. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. I think the super-hero genre will be moving out into other fields. Computer technology will be opening up new and fascinating channels for us to play with and we will.

"I think the superhero genre will be moving out into other fields. Computer technology will be opening up new and fascinating channels for us to play with and we will."

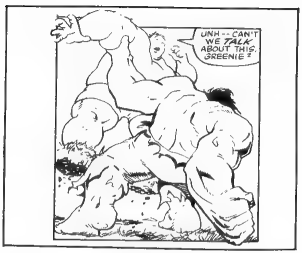
FEATURE: One thing I've been told recently is that according to **Publisher's Weekly**, the best selling paperback genre in the U.S. is romance and the second best is westerns. And excepting reprints, the only material being done in either genre in comics is **Jonah Hex**. And that's it, for the two most popular paperback genres.

DEFALCO: It's not going to come as any big surprise that one of our new packages is being slotted for a romance book and a Western book. Or that I'm working on those two things, either [laughter]. We've been working on them for about a year now. We're not going to publish them until we've ironed out all the bugs. We only want to produce comic books that people will want to buy. We have tested romance comic books and western comic books with our current marketplace, and have found out that they will not sell. We still believe that there is a market for that type of material—we don't think it's our current market—so we're trying to come up with something that will attract outsiders to our market. We're going to use great artists. You would be astounded at all the artists who want to draw romance comics. At one time we were discussing doing a **Millie**

The Model comic book—and Frank Miller came up and asked me if he could do a story in it. I don't know if Frank can do it at this stage of the game. I assume he's committed elsewhere. On another subject, we've got about five other comic book titles that we would do right now if we had the people. We need the creative people. I don't go to too many conventions. People don't know who I am and if they do, they don't care (laughter). I have gone to a few recently—and I only go for two reasons. One reason is to visit established creative people in that area. But the main reason is to see new people and see what they're doing. Right now DC is getting a lot of publicity about their talent search. They're going to do a magazine, and they're going to do this and that. Hey, we're looking for people too.

FEATURE: I don't know that the audience out there knows much about these **Marvel Team-Up** back-ups that you're working on. Can you tell us something about that?

DEFALCO: It's an experimental laboratory for me. I'm allotting five or six pages each month for new people to show their stuff in a regular comic book. They'll be appearing in the back of **Marvel Team-Up**, which is a Spider-Man book and attracts a large audience. It's five or six pages with the actual Marvel characters. They'll be on the marketplace like everyone else. Most of the readers won't even realize the new-comers will be producing the work. The thing I'm afreid of with the DC project is that everybody will say "That's a great package because it's giving people a chance", and will pick it up with positive feelings. Like **Charlton Bullseye**. I read all these wonderful things about **Charlton Bullseye** in the fan press, and what a great comic book it was and how wonderful it was. I hate to say it, but I picked up **Charlton Bullseye** and I thought it was terrible! I mean, it was untried talent putting their stuff down, but without any supervision. It was little more than a fanzine printed as a comic book. I can't see how any of the creative people who worked on the book could have learned very much. In **Marvel Team-Up**, they'll be on a professional level. They'll be paid. They'll have the benefit of whatever I can teach them—and whatever grammatical mistakes I can stick into their scripts (laughter). The vast majority of people who pick up the book, will not know that so-and-so is a beginner. They'll blast him or praise him as if he were a professional. And if you get printed in **Team-Up**, you are a professional. It's my experimental laboratory to find new talent. I'm already getting into trouble with this project. I've told a few people and I've already gotten many submissions. When Marvel moved, I had a boxful of stuff which was lost for a while. All my submissions in this box, lost. With the Marvel move, and Jim Salicrup's leaving, I've lost about two months of time. So I'm two months behind in my reading, and I get these nasty letters or hurt letters from people saying, "You promised to look at my stuff, and you haven't done it." It's easy to read a plot quickly and say, "No, this stinks", and stick it in an envelope with a standard rejection slip and throw it out. But nobody learns anything from that. I like to go through the thing, figure out what's wrong with it, and how we can make it better.

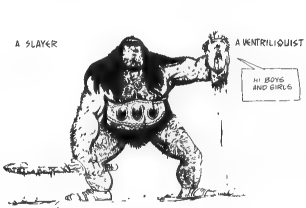


That way I learn—you learn—and, hopefully, somewhere along the line I get a writer. Because if I get ten great writers out of this, that's less work that I'll have to do. And then I can be lazy again. I'll never come in to the office (laughter). Hopefully, I'll catch up before the end of August. I wasn't going to do any writing for three months, so I could catch up on other matters—like I say, it didn't work out.

FEATURE: Okay, for my last question...why do you like comics? What is there about comic books that brings you into the business? You've commented that you feel like you're doing comics because you love it—what is it about comics that inspires that?

DEFALCO: Geez, I don't know—that's a hard question to answer. It's supposed to be, I know.

The main attraction is that comics are fiction. A chance to explore new realms of imagination. It's a collaborative exploration in that I get to explore with an artist and an editor. The three of us together go off in new directions and experiment with new tangents. With



"I love working with artists and the medium —it's just a fascinating medium, you can do anything with it."

prose fiction, you're working in a vacuum for the most part. With things like animation writing, you deal with a story editor to a certain extent, but then there are a thousand re-writes, and that becomes work and boring. With comic strips—comic strips are the same thing as comic books, although with the stuff that I do, you're not exploring, you're telling jokes. And the adventure strip—the syndicates have so totally lost sight of their purpose that it's almost impossible to write a decent adventure strip today.

FEATURE: I'll agree with that.

DEFALCO: Syndicates...the syndicates today limit the amount of story you can have. So much so that they've made it easy for readers to miss reading the strip. They don't like anything to happen on Monday or Saturday or I forget what other day. They say, "Have these as dead ares, so people can miss the strip." The whole purpose of having a strip in the newspaper is so that people will buy the paper every day.

FEATURE: And the only person who seems to be able to get away with ignoring the syndicate and doing what he wants is Milt Canniff.

DEFALCO: When you're a star like Caniff, you can do some great stuff. Archie Goodwin manages to write excellent syndicated strips. Archie obeys all the rules, and **still** it's great.

FEATURE: Sometimes I think that no matter what the restrictions, Archie Goodwin will turn out great stuff.

DEFALCO: Yes, well, Archie Goodwin is the professional's professional. You can tell Archie that he's only allowed to use one word per day, but he'll make sure it's the right word. [Laughter] Syndicate stuff was once the dream...Everybody wanted to sell their own strip, but now I don't know. You have third-generation people running the syndicates, and I think that they've lost sight of what they were trying to do. But I still might go back and do a strip some day. Did I answer your question?

FEATURE: You started to—you've answered it partially, but I don't know if you finished. The question is why you like comics.

DEFALCO: I love working with artists and the medium—it's just a fascinating medium, you can do anything with it. We don't have any real restrictions in comics. The great thing about comic books is that every month you learn how to do them better. If I screw up something this month, I see it in print immediately. Next month I'll know better. It's a constant learning process. I like the idea of constantly learning how to control and improve my craft.

FEATURE: Well, that sounds like a good place to wrap it up, so thank you very much.

DEFALCO: Thank you.

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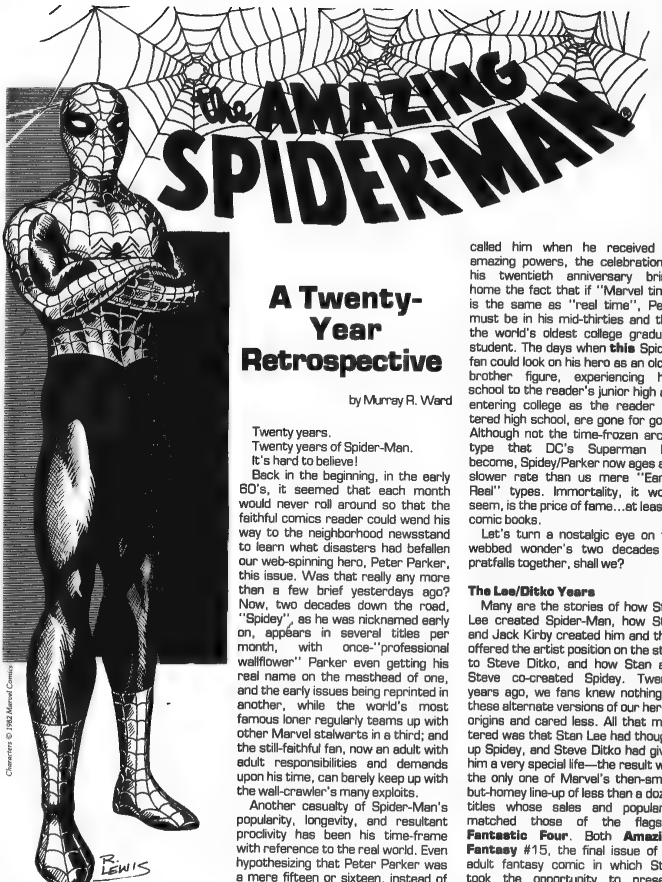

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A Twenty-Year Retrospective

by Murray R. Ward

Twenty years.
Twenty years of Spider-Man.
It's hard to believe!

Back in the beginning, in the early 60's, it seemed that each month would never roll around so that the faithful comics reader could wend his way to the neighborhood newsstand to learn what disasters had befallen our web-spinning hero, Peter Parker, this issue. Was that really any more then a few brief yesterdays ago? Now, two decades down the road, "Spidey", as he was nicknamed early on, appears in several titles per month, with once-"professional wallflower" Parker even getting his real name on the masthead of one, and the early issues being reprinted in another, while the world's most famous loner regularly teams up with other Marvel stalwarts in a third; and the still-faithful fan, now an adult with adult responsibilities and demands upon his time, can barely keep up with the wall-crawler's many exploits.

Another casualty of Spider-Man's popularity, longevity, and resultant proclivity has been his time-frame with reference to the real world. Even hypothesizing that Peter Parker was a mere fifteen or sixteen, instead of the high-school senior the stories called him when he received his amazing powers, the celebration of his twentieth anniversary brings home the fact that if "Marvel time" is the same as "real time", Peter must be in his mid-thirties and thus the world's oldest college graduate student. The days when **this** Spider-fan could look on his hero as an older-brother figure, experiencing high school to the reader's junior high and entering college as the reader entered high school, are gone for good. Although not the time-frozen archetype that DC's Superman has become, Spidey/Parker now ages at a slower rate than us mere "Earth-Real" types. Immortality, it would seem, is the price of fame...at least in comic books.

Let's turn a nostalgic eye on the webbed wonder's two decades of pratfalls together, shall we?

The Lee/Ditko Years

Many are the stories of how Stan Lee created Spider-Man, how Stan and Jack Kirby created him and then offered the artist position on the strip to Steve Ditko, and how Stan and Steve co-created Spidey. Twenty years ago, we fans knew nothing of these alternate versions of our hero's origins and cared less. All that mattered was that Stan Lee had thought up Spidey, and Steve Ditko had given him a very special life—the result was the only one of Marvel's then-small-but-homey line-up of less than a dozen titles whose sales and popularity matched those of the flagship **Fantastic Four**. Both **Amazing Fantasy** #15, the final issue of an adult fantasy comic in which Stan took the opportunity to present Spider-Man's origin, and the first

issue of **Amazing Spider-Man** (so named so as to preserve the "memory" of the "parent" comic) appeared in 1962, the latter in December bearing the cover date March 1963, the same as **Tales of Suspense** #39 in which Iron Man made his bow.

As did most of the other early Marvel heroes, Spider-Man got his powers through the mysterious agency of radiation. Where the FF had been bombarded by cosmic rays on a rocket flight and the Hulk created in the blast of a gamma bomb, Peter Parker, in somewhat less spectacular fashion, ambled into a research lab and was bitten by an accidentally irradiated spider, thus gaining the arachnid's proportionate abilities. There had been heroes with insectoid powers before, notably Archie's concurrent Fly, and even heroes with spider motifs such as MLJ's Web and DC's Terantula in the 40's (not to mention the pulp avenger known as the Spider), but Spider-Man was somehow the first hero to make spidery powers look...well, neat. Formerly a shy homebody, brainy bookworm, and social outcast among his high-school peers, Parker could now revel secretely in being able to lift tremendous weights, walk on walls and ceilings in defiance of gravity, perform incredible acrobatic feats, sense the approach of danger thanks to his built-in warning "spider-sense", and, after he added a pair of self-invented web-shooters to his arsenal, swung across the New York skyline Terzan-fashion at a pretty amazing clip. So what if he couldn't fly like Superman or like the winged-insect-powered heroes? Who needed flight when you could be Spider-Man?

Like most of the early Marvel gang, Spidey had a unique speech pattern, thanks to the scripting of Stan Lee. As problem-ridden Peter Parker, constantly vying for dates, avoiding jock classmate Flash Thompson, striving to make ends meet, and trying to do right by his surrogate parents, Uncle Ben and Aunt May (of whom only the latter survived the origin story), our hero could soliloquize in Shakespearean fashion (a favorite technique of Lee's which he practically trademarked in comics), with the best of them. As Spider-Man, his forte was a constant stream of witticisms and wisecracks the likes of which could never have sprung to the lips of the uncostumed Parker. Of the 60's Marvel heroes, only the FF's Thing, in the jocular pose he assumed between fits of depression, could match Spidey's repertoire of one-liners. For every stock catch-phrase his antagonists would mouth, Spider-Man had a ready retort to make them look foolish: Bursting into a villain's hideout would invariably cause the evildoer to exclaim "Spider-Man!" in alarm, to which Spidey would reply, "Well, I sure ain't Albert Schweitzer!"; encountering the web-spinner for a second time, the villain would cry, "You again!", setting himself up for Spidey's "What do you mean, me **again**? I've **always** been me!" Corny? Of course, but it gave Spider-Man yet another weapon in the fight for comics hero supremacy, in that his readers not only wanted to **be** like Spidey, they even wanted to **talk** like Spidey (ever hear anyone claim they wanted to grow up to talk like Superman?). Eventually, the repertee, which Parker undoubtedly began as a device to keep up his own confidence in his earliest exploits, became a part of his crook-catching arsenal, as well as when the Green Goblin claimed in the midst of battle in issue #23: "You talk so much you get me all confused!", whereupon Spidey realized, "I've got a new weapon I didn't even know about—my spider speech!"

The thing that really set Spider-Man apart from the Fantastic Four, Thor, the Hulk, Ant-Man, and Iron Man, however, was the unique artwork of Steve Ditko. Although he would draw the Hulk in his own strip in the Green Goliath's later run in **Tales To Astonish**, the two main Ditko vehicles of the early Marvel Age were Spider-Man and Dr. Strange, the mysterious mystic then appearing in the back pages of **Strange Tales**. A less speedy artist than Marvel workhorse Jack Kirby, who then drew several full books per month, Ditko made his two strips his own personal property to the extent that when he left Marvel in 1966, subsequent Spidey and "Doc" artists had only two choices: to ignore the past and virtually recreate the character visually (as John Romita would do with Spider-Man), or to swipe blatantly from Ditko himself in an effort to preserve the strip's artistic flavor. Ditko's Peter Parker attended a high school where the perpetually blue-suited alter ego of our protagonist somehow did not look out-of-place in the same class with the sweater-wearing flash. His everyday characters grimaced and laughed and gestured like no one else's in comics. His Spider-Man was the only version to date who looked believable activating his web-shooter (try pressing the tip of your middle finger into the centre of your palm with all other fingers fully extended; it can't be done

MY LEGGINGS, MY PLEA!! LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE!!
AW, GO SLIDE DOWN A BARBED-WIRE FENCE!
© 1962 Marvel Comics
WELL, IT SURE ISN'T THE LONE RANGER!
DIDN'T EXPECT ME SO SOON, DID YOU?
HEY!? WHA—!?
IT'S YOU AGAIN!!
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Weblines and one-liners: Under Lee and Ditko, Spider-man quickly became the superhero king of the one-liners.

unless you're double-jointed...or have spider-powers) in the manner Stan would have us believe it must be triggered; his Spidey could thrill us with unequalled acrobatics and, in the same fight, fall in a heap like a sack of laundry when clobbered. Ditko made it seem natural to us that the web-lines on Spidey's uniform and the webbing under his arms seem to disappear in distance shots (could it have been that Steve just couldn't be bothered drawing all those little lines? Nah!).

Certainly the two classic solo super-hero origin stories predating Spider-Man's are those of Superman and Batman. Each involves the theme of loss and subsequent dedication to a goal. Though the character himself would become a standout for his unique treatment by his creators, Spider-Man's origin tale in many respects follows the classic formula...albeit with a twist or two. Where Superman loses his parents and his entire civilization when the planet Krypton explodes, and subsequently is trained for his life's mission by his earthly foster parents, and where Batman is inspired to combat crime by the deaths of his parents at the hands of a gunman, Spider-Man, as Peter Parker, has already lost his real parents (whose fate is only made known to him years later) as his story begins, and is fated to lose his surrogate father, Uncle Ben, before learning the lesson that Superman spent his entire childhood and adolescence having drummed into him: that with great power comes great responsibility. This is the central theme of the Spider-Man saga. Superman rarely questions his lot; to misuse or neglect to use his world-beating powers in the service of humanity would be unthinkable to him. Batman is positively driven in his pursuit of the criminal element, but it is even rarer for him to consider any other sort of life than the one he leads. Both the major DC heroes recognize their status as larger-than-life figures, almost living legends, to the rest of the world, and regard their battles against evil as a "holy chore". Spider-Man, on the other hand, would dearly love to chuck the whole super-hero trip, but is compelled to use his powers to help

THAT NIGHT...
PLEASE STOP WORRYING, MRS. PARKER! I ASSURE YOU IT'S ONLY A SPRAIN--ALTHOUGH IT IS A PAINFUL ONE! YOUR NEPHEW'S ARM WILL BE FINE IN A FEW WEEKS!
A FEW WEEKS! THE VULTURE WON'T WAIT THAT LONG!
NOW PROMISE YOU WON'T PLAY THOSE DANGEROUS VOLLEY BALL GAMES IN THE SCHOOL YARD ANY MORE, DEAR!
NOT FOR THE NEXT WEEK, AUNT MAY!
© 1982 Marvel Comics

others by his own altruism, stemming in large part from his guilt over the death of Uncle Ben which he might have prevented had he acted less selfishly. More than once Parker has tried unsuccessfully to hang up his costume for good, only to be driven back into the fray by forces beyond his ability to resist. Also, in his lighter moods, he recognizes the beneficial role being Spider-Man has played in his life, and that he could never bring himself to foreseke that role while he still possessed his powers. Becoming Spider-Man (which entails the one-two punch of his fist gaining super-powers, and then having his nose rubbed in the fact that he must use those abilities for a higher goal than his own gain) was what matured Peter Parker; more than any of his costumed compeers, his origin story is that of a rite of passage into adulthood, a coming-of-age of the hero. As such, he cannot stop being Spider-Man without regressing to the adolescent self-centered Parker of younger days. "Web-slinging" has become like a drug to him; as he once observed, "Being Spider-Man is like going out with girls! I can't give it up!".

To continue the comparison to the Men of Steel and the Caped Crusader, Spider-Men possesses "powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men" as does Superman (though his powers are by no means as great), but given his character and limitations, he is, as is Batman, more comfortable battling gangsters and the like on a local level than in a situation where he is called upon to save the world. Although more physically powerful than the Darknight Detective, Spidey even today is a youngster and a novice do-gooder when compared with the vast knowledge and experience upon which the Batman can drew, and thus he remains more nearly Batman's equal than Superman's, and far more at home in the former hero's urban crimebusting milieu. His role as a figure representing youth, as opposed to the patriarchial Superman or the father-figure (mostly with regard to Robin) Batman, is accentuated when one considers that while Superman has passed beyond the need of surrogate parents (and they have been removed from the stage once their pivotal role is played out), and Batman has become himself the parent figure as well as the ultimate loner (despite the presence of a protege, Robin; an aide, Alfred; and a friend and foil, Commissioner Gordon; Batman has never had a real family and thus remains an essentially lonely figure), Spider-Man, as Peter Parker, has lost only one surrogate parent in his growing-up process while retaining the other. And make no mistake, for all the misuses of her character over the years, Aunt May with her longer life experience is still able to teach her nephew a thing or two about living. Taking the name "Spider-**Man**", while still an adolescent, is a conceit on Peter's part; he still has a lot to learn. And at times only his last remaining "family" can teach him what he needs to know.

In fact, another outstanding aspect of Spider-Man as a continuing feature, begun in the Lee/Ditko era and continued to the present day, is his cast of supporting characters, a cast so voluminous when compared to that of other super-hero characters' strips as to make Spidey's mag a candidate for an honorary "Super-

team" book. At DC, Superman would have his tiny clique of close friends among his Daily Planet co-workers, and Batman would have his helpmates in crimefighting (while seldom getting beyond casual acquaintance with anybody as Bruce Wayne, since Wayne is far more a cover for Batman than Clark Kent or Peter Parker—each of whom functions as a separate person from the super-identity—ever were for Superman or Spider-Man, respectively). At Marvel, a team strip like the Fantastic Four's needed few supporting cast members (Alicia, the Thing's girlfriend, being the major recurring one), as the quarter of heroes could interact sufficiently amongst themselves, and none of the other Marvel soloists seemed inclined to evolve a circle of friends beyond a single "best buddy" and the obligatory "love interest" (usually an unrequitted one). Spider-Man, however, had a burgeoning group of repertory players in both identities from day one: the aforementioned Aunt May, functioning as well-intentioned if misinformed [never suspecting Peter's dual role] advisor, substitute family, and major raison d'etre for Spidey's keeping his true identity secret; schoolmates Flash Thompson [who initially despised Parker but came to hero-worship Spider-Man] and Liz Allen [originally a derider of "Bookworm Parker" but eventually smitten with him]; the blustering J. Jonah Jameson who almost single-handedly kept Spider-Man, whom he hated, from gaining the popularity with the public enjoyed by the Fantastic Four and Marvel's other more "conventional" super-doers, but who, as publisher of the Daily Bugle newspaper, unwittingly employed his greatest enemy as freelance photographer Peter Parker; Betty Brant, Jonah's secretary, who became Peter's first steady girlfriend and who shared a common background with him [both lost family members to criminal violence and both were forced early into the working world by their loss of parents; ironically, it would be Betty's completely opposite response to her past experiences—she wanted nothing more to do with violence or danger—that would eventually separate the two).

And the supporting cast, like the hero's personal circumstances, was subject to growth and change. As Parker grew older, Aunt May's role was reduced as her participation became less necessary; Flash would follow Peter to college as both won scholarships [Thompson for athletics, Parker for scholastic achievement, thus reaffirming their status as foils), while Liz Allen would be left behind after high school graduation; Betty, as noted, would finally lose her status as female lead as the relationship between her and Peter deteriorated and finally ended. Only Jameson would survive virtually intact, and rightly so. Graduation served as a turning point in the series not only by changing the roles of the established characters, and by subtracting Liz, but also by adding some new players: Harry Osborn, who began as a second Flash Thompson and Parker-baiter but later evolved into Peter's first close friend, while being revealed as the son of one of his greatest foes; Gwen Stacy, initially Liz's replacement, who held ambivalent feelings for our hero but became his second great love during the Romita era; and the mysterious Mary Jane Watson, continually mentioned and once almost-but-not-quite seen in the Ditko issues, the niece of Aunt May's best friend, who finally appeared and joined the cast after Ditko's departure. Years later, Parker's college graduation and ascendancy to graduate school would again reorganize the supporting roles in the strip, with Flash, Harry, Mary Jane, Liz [who had since returned], and Flash's later-acquired Vietnamese girlfriend, Sha Shan, joining the by-now-deceased Gwen in semi-limbo, while new peer figures Steve Hopkins, Philip Cheng, Marcy Kane, Debra Whitman, et al took over.

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No reminiscence of the early days of Spider-Man could be complete without mention of his villains. Here he borrowed a page from DC's **Flash** and **Batman** titles, and rapidly built up a Rogue's Gallery unmatched in comics. That the vast majority of Spidey's most famous foes date from the original Lee/Ditko issues is no accident: each is a unique antagonist, both visually and motivationally. Consider: the Vulture, most charismatic of villains, with the power of winged flight, mainly because he physically resembled a real vulture, even out of costume; Dr. Octopus, Spider-Man's greatest arch-foe, who matches him in scientific expertise and whose namesake, like that of the hero he battles, is an eight-limbed predatory creature; the Sandman, who would go on to equal fame in other Marvel strips to the extent that by the first issue of **Marvel Team-Up**, Spidey would consider the Fantastic Four more the "experts" at battling Sandman than himself; the Lizard, first and best of Spidey's "Jekyll/Hyde" foes, who would return in his human identity of Dr. Curt Conners as almost the only dependable friend Spider-Man would have in his costumed identity; Electro, destined to emulate Dr. Octopus's idea of a league of villains against Spider-Man [as seen in the first **Spider-Man Annual**] against his own second super-foe, Daredevil [in the first **Daredevil Annual**]; the Enforcers, perhaps the ultimate gangland foes of Spidey, who served such bosses as the Big Man, the Green Goblin, and the Sandman in their collective

AHAH! YOU BLUNDERED RIGHT INTO MY TRAP... AS I KNEW YOU WOULD!
WELL, MERCY ME!
I'LL TAKE YOU UP SO HIGH THAT YOU'LL BE COMPLETELY HELPLESS! EVEN A SPIDER IS POWERLESS IN THE SKY!
ARE YOU SURE YOU WERE NEVER VACCINATED WITH A PARALYSIS NEEDLE?
YOUR FLIPPANCY IS WASTED ON ME, SPIDER-MAN! YOU'RE JUST WHISTLING IN THE DARK! I KNOW AN ICY FEAR MUST BE GRIPPING YOUR HEART RIGHT NOW!
WELL, I'LL ADMIT, I'VE HAD HAPPIER MOMENTS!
BEFORE I DROP YOU, SPIDER-MAN, I WANT TO SAY I ADMIRE YOUR COURAGE! ANYONE ELSE WOULD BE BEGGING FOR MERCY NOW! I'M ALMOST SORRY TO HAVE TO DO THIS...
YEAH! I CAN SEE THAT YOU'RE ALL SHOOK UP!
WELL, I'M GONNA TELL YOU A SECRET, THIS LITTLE PARTY ISN'T OVER YET! WATCH...!
YOU--YOU PINNED MY WINGS WITH YOUR WEB!! YOU KNOW, IF I CANNOT FLY... WE BOTH WILL PERISH!
WELL, WHO WANTS TO LIVE FOREVER?!
I DON'T WANT TO DIE! SAVE ME! I'LL DO SOMETHING! ANYTHING! SAVE ME!
I CAN'T! I'M TOO BUSY ADMIRING YOUR TIGHT-LIPPED BRAVERY!
WELL, ANYTHING TO STOP YOUR MOANING! I SUPPOSE I SPIN A LITTLE WEB WHILE WE FALL...?!
AT A TIME LIKE THIS?!
SURE! IT MIGHT BE FUN! 'SPECIALLY IF I MAKE IT WITH MY NEW SEMI-SOLID FLUID WHICH ENABLES IT TO ACT LIKE A PARACHUTE!

From the beginning there was something different about Spider-man. Basically he was not unlike other comic book characters of his time - they all wore costumes and most of them enjoyed some kind of power far beyond those of mortal men. But there was a **magic** about Spider-man. The way Stan Lee and Steve Ditko approached each story of Spider-man helped set it apart from other comics. The reader was drawn into the story, he felt with and for Peter Parker, cheered Spidey on to each victory, and all the while was treated to some of the zaniest antics in comics.

Perhaps the **magic** wasn't in Spider-man after all, but rather in the people who created him and established Spider-man as one of the most popular comic book heroes of all time. And the people who continue to keep Spider-man on top.

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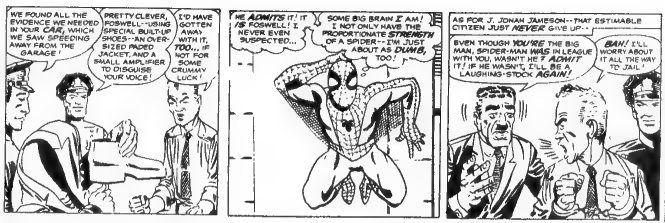
WE FOUND ALL THE EVIDENCE WE NEEDED IN YOUR CAR, WHICH WE SAW SPEEDING AWAY FROM THE GARAGE!
PRETTY CLEVER, ROSWELL--USING SPECIAL BUILT-UP SHOES--AN OVER-SIZED PADED JACKET, AND A SMALL AMPLIFIER TO DISGUISE YOUR VOICE!
I'D HAVE GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT, TOO... IF NOT FOR SOME CRUMMY LUCK!
HE ADMITS IT! IT IS ROSWELL! I NEVER EVEN SUSPECTED...
SOME BIG BRAIN I AM! I NOT ONLY HAVE THE PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH OF A SPIDER--I'M JUST ABOUT AS DUMB, TOO!
AS FOR J. JONAH JAMESON--THAT ESTIMABLE CITIZEN JUST NEVER GIVE UP--!
EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE THE BIG MAN, SPIDER-MAN WAS IN LEAGUE WITH YOU, WASN'T HE? ADMIT IT, IF HE WASN'T, I'LL BE A LAUGHING-STOCK AGAIN!
BAH! IT'LL WORRY ABOUT IT ALL THE WAY TO JAIL!
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career; the Big Man himself, organizer of the Enforcers, later to return as Bugle reporter Frederick Foswell, the police informer called "Patch", and one of the first Spider-players to die; Mysterio, the first to convincingly duplicate the web-spinner's powers and frame him through impersonation; Kraven the Hunter, who would return again and again to challenge Spidey to the "most dangerous game" of all; the Scorpion, deliberately created by Jonah Jameson to be Spidey's opposite number and more powerful; the Molten Man, whose appearance on the cover of issue #28 caused an overnight sensation. And, of course, the evildoer who came to share the status of Doc Ock (as Spidey dubbed him) as Spider-Man Villain Number One: the Green Goblin, whose identity the readers were challenged to guess even before Lee and Ditko had introduced any of the suspects into the storyline.

The issues of **Spider-Man** by Stan and Steve, plus the first two issues drawn by John Romita (#39 - #40) and his first three annuals (the first two by Ditko) form a sage-within-a-saga in the Spidey canon. Spider-Man's career and his role as both super-hero and despised outcast are delineated and dealt with in the early issues, even as Peter Parker's relationships with the other regular cast members are introduced and explored, and the gallery of villains are brought on stage one at a time. The accumulation of adversaries comes to a head in the first **Spider-Man Annual**, in which Dr. Octopus organizes the Vulture, Sandman, Electro, Mysterio, and Kraven into a vengeance cadre, and unwittingly faces Spidey with a heretofore-unexperienced triple threat: 1) the exposure of a known link between Spider-Man and Betty Brant, which could lead to the revelation of his true identity; 2) the first endangering of Aunt May by one of Spidey's enemies; and 3) the possibility of life without his spider-powers, which he believes lost at one point in this story. The use of a continued story lasting more then a single issue, still an innovation at the time, would signal an important point in the developing epic whenever it occured. The first two back-to-back issues to feature the same villain, Doc Oak again (#11 - #12), deepened and defined the romance between Peter and Betty and simultaneously sowed the seeds of their sadly inevitable break-up. Then the three-parter in issues #17 - #19 faced both halves of our hero's double identity with their greatest crises to date in a beautifully structured tale of tragedy and triumph in #17, Spidey sees a chance to improve his public image at last by supporting Rash Thompson's proposed "Spider-Man Fan Club" ruined when circumstances, in the form of a heart attack undergone by Aunt May, make him appear a coward when he is forced to flee a public battle with the Green Goblin; in #18, Parker seems a likely candidate for suicide as he loses Betty, till now his sole supporter, and dares not appear in public as Spider-Man to clear what little good name he might once have had, while Aunt May remains dangerously ill; and finally in #19, after a pep talk from the doting May herself, Spidey returns to action and wreaks havoc on a complacent gangdom, while at the same time clearing up most of his Peter Parker problems as well. The second three-part story, in #31 - #33, again follows the structure of a classic tragedy, with Spider-Man's world beginning to crumble with Aunt May's imminent demise in #31; his efforts to save her disintegrated by the machinations of the Master Planner, who turns out to be Dr. Octopus in #32; and his victory against impossible odds in #33.

If **Spider-Man** had been cancelled with that issue, it would already have been assured a place in the **Comics Hall of Fame** for all time. Peter Parker's triumph is so resounding, so refreshing, so uplifting, as to leave nothing more to be said on the strip's central theme. However, there are loose ends...and these are cleared up for the most part in the remaining issues of the first forty. Throughout the remaining Ditko-drawn run of the book, the Parker-Brant romance evaporates by degrees and culminates in a separation (Betty returns in #41 only to be dismissed from leading-lady consideration for good) while Spidey fights a somewhat lifeless (by comparison with the preceding issues) collection of past adversaries, including Kraven and Molten Man, and also-rans like the Looter, Professor Stromm, and "a guy named Joe". At the same time, the other main loose end is building to a climax in the background: we meet Harry's father, businessman Normen Osborn, who is also an acquaintance of Jameson's, learn he is the crooked former partner of robot-builder Stromm, see him secretly put out a

contract on the web-crawler, and finally, in the first two Romita issues, find him unmasked as the Green Goblin even as he unmasks Spidey in return. The Goblin mystery is ended in #40; and the status of Spidey as loner is reaffirmed in the third Annual (the second Annual teams Spidey with the other Ditko star, Doc Strange), wherein he tries to join the Avengers and meets the same outcome as when he attempted to join the FF in his premiere issue.

Steve Ditko began to be credited with co-plotting the Spider-Man stories with #26 - #27, which involved a three-way struggle between Spidey, the Goblin, and the Crime-Master, a would-be successor to the Big Man. His involvement began to slacken off in later issues, and he finally departed Marvel after **Spider-Man** #38. The web-spinner would continue, and would indeed gain new popularity with the general public, thanks in part to the TV cartoon series based on the strip, which debuted the following year, but he would never be quite the same again...at least to those of us who had witnessed the original version first-hand.

The Lee/Romita/Et Al Years

Stan Lee continued as Spider-Man's scripter through issue #100, and then returned for a few more issues after a quartet of off-the-beaten-Spidey-track tales by Roy Thomas. Most of the remaining Lee issues were drawn by John Romita, Ditko's immediate replacement. As the Bullpen Bulletins page of the time had it, Romita "added the element of glamor" to the strip. Nothing could've been truer. Romita's Peter Parker eventually acquired a wardrobe beyond his perennial blue suits and he and all the other characters were suddenly rendered far more realistically than had been Ditko's wont. Sans glasses since issue #8, Parker now acquired rounder, less angular features, and actually became handsome. Aunt May lost twenty years off her age, and Gwen and Mary Jane, replacing Betty and Liz as the resident females, were easily the two most beautiful "hero's girlfriends" around...and formerly lovelorn Peter Parker had **both** of them (for a while, anyway).

Spidey, who had begun as "the super-hero **you** would be if you were a super-hero", to quote Stan, became the super-hero Archie Andrews would be if he were not Pureheart the Powerful. With Rash departed for the service, Harry became Peter's combination Jughead and Reggie—a best friend with whom he began sharing an apartment, and the dating partner of whichever of the book's twin love goddesses Parker chose to neglect in a given issue. Where once Harry referred to the girls as "your Mary Jane and my Gwen", the reverse was soon true, as the Parker-Stacy affair became the title's central romance. Peter still had problems, many of them caused by his dual identity, but he would never again be as convincing a ne'er-do-well as in the beginning. When a classmate can comment (upon seeing Parker being fawned over by Gwen and MJ simultaneously): "what's he got that we haven't got?", it's hard for the reader to feel too sorry for the hero.

As far as Spider-Man himself went, during his reign, Romita would introduce relatively few new villains, preferring to return the Ditko standbys at intervals, all of them, like the regular cast, looking younger, spryer, and more realistic than in their last appearances. The major new nemesis included the Rhino, who almost immediately transferred his enmities to the Hulk, much to Spidey's relief; the Shocker, who despite his name had vibrational powers, not electrical ones like Electro; and the Kingpin, easily the most formidable of the gang-boss figures in **Spider-Man** and the final successor to the mantle of Big Man, Crime-Master, the original Golbin, et al, who had tried to organize New York's mobs "like a business".

Don Heck, John Buscema, and Jim Mooney would all work on the strip, usually over Romita layouts, during its second era, but without really changing the feel of the book. When John did depart for a while, after being promoted to the post of Marvel's art director, Gil Kane was given the Spidey assignment. For a time Kane combined the best features of the two earlier versions: as one fan put it, he drew Spider-Man "spiderily" like Ditko, and he drew gorgeous female characters like Romita; what could be better?

Characters continued to move in and out of Parker/Spidey's life. Fred Foswell, as mentioned earlier, came in and was killed off; the Bugle acquired a black city editor, Joe Robertson, whose attitude towards Spider-Man resounded more of Curt Connors than of Jonah Jameson; and perhaps most importantly, with the stabilization of the Peter-Gwen romance, Gwen's father, a retired police captain, became a regular, and provided our hero with the closest thing to a father-figure he had had since Uncle Ben's death, even to discovering his secret and keeping the knowledge to himself, as Spidey learned only at Captain Stacy's death. The Green Goblin, inflicted with amnesia after #40, regained his memory and returned twice, his original motivation to control New York's crime scene now supplanted by his mad compulsion to seek revenge on his arachnid adversary, whose identity he now knew: the first time he rated a giant magazine-sized issue in which to strut his stuff; the second, he was involved in a controversial series concerning drug use which brought Marvel into conflict with the Comics Code Authority. Then he returned a third time...

WELL, I LIKE WINTER SPORTS AS MUCH AS THE NEXT GUY... BUT THIS IS GETTING RIDICULOUS!
KRAVEN'LL HAVE TO WAIT WHILE I GO HOME AND HIT THE SACK!
BUT AS SPIDEY SWINGS AWAY, LITTLE DOES HE DREAM...
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Romita's artwork added realism and glamour to Peter Parker and Company.

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The Conway/Andru/Et Al Years

After a hundredth issue which recapped the hero's career, as anniversary issues are wont to do, but ended with the unbelievable—a Spider-Man whose spidery attributes had run amuck and now included four extra arms!—Roy Thomas stepped in to "have some fun with the character". Thomas scripted a short series of Spidey adventures in which the usual pattern [Spidey and his enemies as essentially the only fantasy elements in an otherwise realistic world—note that guest-stars from other Marvel titles were never a staple of **Spider-Man**, the Human Torch being the most frequent in his role as our hero's sometime rival] was disrupted to do friendly pastiches of **Dracula** [Morbius, the Living Vampire] and **King Kong** [a Savage Land story with Ka-Zar, Kraven, and the monstrous Gog], while also resolving Spidey's rather outre predicament with the unneeded extraneous appendages. Then followed another year of Lee/Kane and Lee/Romita tales, after which Gerry Conway became the permanent Spider-Man scripter. Following a Doc Ock multi-parter, the totally confusing deja vu sequence in which the events of **Spectacular Spider-Man** [the vehicle of the Goblin's first return, mentioned earlier] #1 were reprinted as if they had just transpired, and a guest-shot by the Hulk, came the next turning point in the series: issue #121.

The Green Goblin was back yet again, and he brought with him tragedy, regrets, and broken promises for Spidey. In keeping with his lifelong altruism, Spidey had spared the Goblin in their mutually revelatory encounter in #40; now the villain returned to do away with the hero's true love. Likewise, he had promised the dying Capt. Stacy he would take care of his daughter; now the Goblin murdered Gwen Stacy, despite Spider-Man's best efforts. And in the last previous Goblin story, Harry Osborn, despondent over continually having to take seconds to his roomie, had become a pill-popper; now he turned to hard drugs and his resultant illness drove his father over the brink, causing the Goblin's reactivation. In the following issue, the Goblin also died, at his own hand, and the repercussions of those twin deaths would color the **Spider-Man** series for the duration of its run under Conwey's hand.

Gil Kane as penciller gave way to Ross Andru, who remained the mainstay artist throughout Conway's tenure and beyond. A dark tone began to permeate Spider-Man's world. With the revisions in the Comics Code indirectly brought on by the earlier drug story, vampires, werewolves, and the like were again acceptable comics fare, and bloodhungry Morbius was quickly followed by J. Jonah Jameson's astronaut son turned Man-Wolf. Formerly happy-go-lucky Mary Jane wrestled with her reluctance to make permanent commitments when she suddenly found herself the sole surviving Parker love interest. Harry went completely off the deep end and became a second Goblin; then he underwent therapy which boomeranged, causing his psychiatrist to become yet a third Goblin. And one of Parker's college profs, having conceived an unhealthy preoccupation with the late Gwen, became **another** Goblinesque villain, the Jackal, with a built-in vengeance motive against Spidey. [And even **he** eventually produced a successor, the weirdling Carrion. But that's another magazine...] All was not dark, however. For those who read between the lines, it was obvious that as a reward for surviving the Gerry Conway issues [including Gwen's death, Aunt May's ludicrous almost-marriage to Doc Ock, the misconceived Spider-Mobile, the Executioner-patterned Punisher, and the Jackal's revival of poor, dead Gwen as a clone—and the subsequent departure of both Jackal and Gwen-II in company with a clone double of Spidey himself...whew!], Peter Parker, between issues #149 and #150, was finally allowed to lose his virginity, courtesy of Mary Jane.

Meanwhile, Back At The Marvel Universe

Concurrent with the Conway tenure on **Amazing Spider-Man** came the institution of the second regular Spider-Man title: **Marvel Team-Up** [actually, it was the third, if one counts reprints since **Marvel Tales**, once a Marvel Annual and later an anthology of reprints of Spidey and other heroes, had by this time become a regular-sized vehicle for Spider-Man reprints only]. The premise of **Marvel Team-Up**, unlikely as it sounded to us fans at its inception, was to duplicate for Marvel the success of DC's **The Brave and The Bold**, in which Batman fought in tandem with a different DC hero each issue. Why unlikely? Because while Spider-Man was the logical "regular" star of **Marvel Team-Up**, being Marvel's most popular single character, he was also the **least** logical choice for the role, being Marvel's inveterate lone-wolf hero. Spider-Man seldom entertained guest-stars in his own book, rarely guested outside its pages, and had failed to join all three of Marvel's then-established super-teams [the X-Men had considered him as a stand-by at one point, soon after his unsuccessful Avengers initiation]. That he would now suddenly begin meeting other Marvel heroes and heroines on a monthly basis seeming inconceivable.

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Initially, Spidey's regular co-star was the Human Torch. Although he had not appeared regularly with the web-spinner since the latter's early career, the bickering comradery between the two had resurfaced as an element in the Conway issues of Spidey's own book, so it was not altogether unlikely that the two would share the occasional adventure. After three Spidey-Torch capers in a row, the likelihood of this recurring duo became at least as hard to conscience as would the appearance of Spider-Man and a different co-star each month, and so the format went the straight **B&B** route with **#4**.

The X-Men en masse, every past, present, and future Avenger, and every other super-person in all of Marvel Comics with or without his/her own title or feature would team-up with Spidey in the course of **Marvel Team-Up**'s still-ongoing run. The title proved one of the most immediately popular of the large number of books launched by the company at that time. Upon Roy Thomas's promotion to editor-in-chief. Following an interesting opening string of issues [notably the Tomorrow War sequence which involved Spidey, Iron Man, the Torch, the Inhumans, Kang, and Zarrko the Tomorrow Man in a three-issue continuity; and some Len Wein-scripted tales which introduced new villains—some of whom later appeared in the main **Spider-Man** book], the series began to degenerate into formula, with Spidey meeting another hero and a villain every issue, ad infinitum, ad nauseum.

This depressing tendency was broken with the arrival of neo-scripter Bill Mantlo in one of his first permanent assignments. Obviously having long hankered after the Spidey strip, [from his inclusions of Spider-Man elements such as Jonah Jameson, the Bugle's rival newspaper the Daily Globe, and the Prowler, a later Romita friendly-enemy of Spidey's, in his "Sons of the Tiger/White Tiger" series in **Deadly Hands of Kung Fu**] Mantlo revived **Spider-Man #19**, as Spidey and Torch were joined by Mantlo's own Tiger Sons in combat with Sandmen, the Enforcers, and successors to both the Crime-Master and the Big Man [who turned out to be the son and daughter (?!) of the original C-M and Foswell). Subsequent issues included a four-parter that sent Spidey, the Scarlet Witch, the Vision, Moondragon, and Dr. Doom [!] time-traveling in Doom's chrononautical device; a duo of follow-ups in which a time-lost Spidey accidentally dropped in on Marvel's future-dwelling Killraven and Deathlok; a Spidey-Iron Man-Dr. Strange tetralogy which served to introduce police Capt. Jean DeWolff, later a supporting player to both Spidey and Iron Man; and continuity running through an annual with the X-Men to issues with the Hulk, the Mantlo-created Woodgod, and Warlock, without becoming lost in confusion. With Mantlo's departure, Chris Claremont took over and presented some equally-unlikely but truly entertaining encounters with everyone from Iron Fist and the Daughters of the Dragon [covering the transition from the final issue of **Iron Fist** to the first **Power Man and Iron Fist** without making Spider-Man seem like an intruder into the storyline] to Ms. Marvel and Dr. Strange (simultaneously). The fact that the later Mantlo issues and the majority of the Claremonts were drawn by Chris's soon-to-be-famed X-Men collaborator, John Byrne, didn't exactly hurt, either. Some of the cross-continuity between Spider-Man's solo title and **Team-Up** left things to be desired, but overall, the twice-monthly occurence of the wall-crawling wonder on the newsstands seemed to work. Soooo...

Back Again, For The First Time

In 1976, as a consequence of office politics best forgotten, Marvel created a second (er, that is, third...or was it fourth or fifth?) Spider-Man title. In addition to **The Amazing Spider-Man**, **Marvel Tales** [reprints], **Marvel Team-Up** [Spidey meeting other characters], and the fledgling **Spidey Super Stories** [a project undertaken in tandem with Children's Television Workshop, resulting in a kiddie-style "Easy-Reader" version of Spider-Man, which tankfully does not enter into our discussion, as it bears no resemblance to goings-on in the Marvel Universe proper], there was born **Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider Man** [not to be confused with the Just Plain **Spectacular Spider-Man** magazine of 1968].

One of the four Spidey vehicles still being published [**Spidey Super Stories** recently bit the dust after a long run], **PPTSSS** [for short] has gone through almost every conceivable excuse for its existence. It has been "the Spider-Man book written by Gerry Conway", "the Spider-Man book which focuses on Peter Parker more than on Spidey" [a dubious proposition at best, since Parker must become Spidey to fight any villain more dangerous than a pickpocket], "the Spider-Man book which concentrates on Parker's relationships at the Daily Bugle while the parent mag is concerned with his college career" [or vice versa; it doesn't matter, since this plan never really worked, either], etc. Perhaps the most reasonable explanation was

that since Marvel's #1 character now had his own series **and** a regular team-up series, he could support a second regular solo series (as Superman did in **Action** and Batman in **Detective**), as well.

For whatever reasons, **PPTSS**'s main purpose in life for most of its existence has been to confound continuity enthusiasts even more so than did the creation of **Marvel Team-Up**. If the author may be allowed a free plug for a product not his own, it is the unenviable task of George Olshevsky and his cadre of equally demented assistants (of which your humble scribe is one) to unscramble the webbed one's entire cross-continuity in the forthcoming (at this writing) **Revised Spider-Man Index**. From personal experience, this author can state that **Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man** has not exactly made the job any easier.

Spectacular Spider-Man (many of us immediately began to refer to **Amazing Spider-Man** as "Regular **Spider-Man**" to differentiate the two) has thus far enjoyed a highly successful, if chequered, run. In the long view, it and its sister magazine are virtually indistinguishable. There would be a period in which **Amazing** was superior, then one in which **Spectacular** shone; a year of very good art in one, then in the other, then in neither, then in both; and so on. When Marv Wolfman, the next major **Amazing** writer after Conway and Len Wein, instituted a rapid-fire series of changes in Peter Parker's life after a long period of relative stagnation (i.e., Peter's graduation from college, Spidey's being cleared of long-standing charges by the police, et al), the **Spectacular** crew was hard-pressed to remember where they stood. Recently, Bill Mantlo and Roger Stern traded places on the two titles, causing the regular reader to "feel" as if he were reading **Amazing** while perusing **Spectacular**, and vice versa, if indeed he still had had any instinctual means of telling the two apart.

Which Brings Us Back To The Present

As of this year, it's been twenty unbelievable years that we have spent with Spider-Man, although Spider-Man has, perhaps regrettably, perhaps not, failed to age two decades as have his readers. As if to celebrate, Marvel has instituted a move which might have seemed an obvious one from the beginning of Spidey's multiple-title status: they have placed a single editor, Tom DeFalco, in charge of all of the various Spider-titles, where formerly each Marvel editor had a Spidey book to call his own. This is certainly a step in the right direction as far as returning Parker/Spidey to a semblance of a coherent lifestyle, although one might additionally wish it were not beyond the company's capacity to emulate DC's Batman yet again and give our hero a single writer (if not artist) on at least his two solo books (**Batman** and **Detective** at this writing are both written by Gerry Conway, and the plotlines move from one book to the other and back again, so as to give the impression of a single bi-weekly title). Ah, well, one can dream. At least, both Bill Mantlo and Roger Stern are devoted to the character and can be counted upon to do right by him, if their past performances are any indication.

To mention every facet of Spider-Man's career in this article would swell it beyond the bounds of any single issue of this magazine, so naturally there are highlights our brief look back has missed. The author has tried to touch on those portions of the Spidey saga generally considered the most memorable.

One thing I feel certain of: it doesn't **seem** like twenty years since **Spider-Man** #1. I feel as if I had aged no more than has Peter Parker during that time.

I'd like to think reading **Spider-Man** had something to do with that feeling.

BY THE WAY, WHERE WERE YOU WHILE SPIDER-MAN WAS BATTLING THE VULTURE?
ME? OH... I WAS HIDING IN A CLOSET!
I'M AFRAID I'M JUST NOT THE HEROIC TYPE!
NEITHER AM I! MAYBE THAT'S WHY I LIKE YOU SO MUCH, PETER! AT LEAST YOU DON'T PRETEND TO BE WHAT YOU'RE NOT!
GOSH! IF SHE ONLY KNEW!!
!!MMPPF!!!
GRMMPFF!!
!!!
LOOK! MISTER JAMESON CAN'T TALK! I WONDER WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM?
WRONG? HUMPH! MURDEROUS, MEAN!
PETER, SOMETIMES I GET THE FEELING THAT YOU'RE LAUGHING AT A SECRET LITTLE JOKE THAT'S ALL YOUR OWN!
IF YOU KEEP USING THAT COCK, PERFUME, BETTY, I MAY BREAK DOWN AND TELL YOU ABOUT IT SOME DAY!
...and a little self-confidence.
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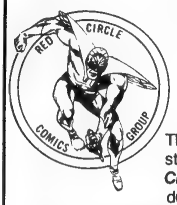
With great power comes great responsibility...

PETER PARKER! THAT'S THE CLOSEST THING TO A ROMANTIC REMARK I'VE EVER HEARD YOU SAY!
GOSH, I CAN BE MORE ROMANTIC THAN THAT! HERE, REST YOUR HEAD ON MY SHOULDER, BLUE EYES, AND LET'S ENJOY THE SILENCE!
BUT WHAT WILL MR. JAMESON SAY?
NOTHING, BABY... FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR!
the END
WE ADMIT IT! THIS ISN'T A TYPICAL ENDING FOR A TYPICAL SUPER-HERO TALE! BUT, WE'VE NEVER CLAIMED THAT SPIDER-MAN WAS A TYPICAL SUPER-HERO! IN FACT, NEXT ISSUE, HE DOES SOME REALLY UNTYPICAL THINGS! BUT, SEE FOR YOURSELF WHEN WE MEET AGAIN!



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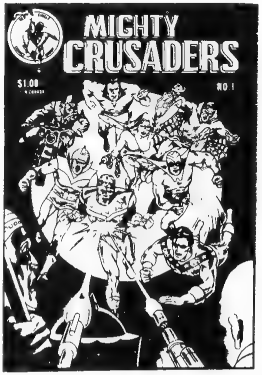

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THE UNCANNY
X-WIVES
I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS, HANK!
TO ULTRON LOVE, DAD
LEWIS
Characters © 1982 Marvel Comics

1970 cont.

By Don and Maggie Thompson

The end of the decade saw more than the first issue of Robert M. Overstreet's **The Comic Book Price Guide**. It was a time of increasing interest in the comics field from the average reader—and of changes in that field.

Fans lost, for example, some noted creators. Jack Miller, Lee W. Stanley, H. M. Bateman, Martin Brenner, Richard Taylor, Ken Kling, Anton, Bob Barnes, Rube Goldberg, Walt Scott, and Harrison Cady died in 1970. "Lank" Leonard died August 2, one day after Uncle Phil married Minerva Mutton in his **Mickey Finn** strip. Jim Holdaway died February 18; he had drawn Peter O'Donnell's **Modesty Blaise** since the strip began in May 1963. On the day of his death, the 2078th **Modesty Blaise** strip appeared—and there remained only six more weeks' worth of his work. [Romero took over the strip after Holdaway's death, and other artists followed Romero, but Holdaway's ardent admirers have never warmed completely to anyone else's art on the British adventure strip.]

Wendell Crowley's death in 1970 hit many comics fans especially hard. Harnes Ware wrote, "When the surgeons who were to perform open-heart surgery on Wendell Crowley heard that he'd once been the editor of Captain Marvel comic books, they flocked around him, shaking his hand in awe and admiration. 'Captain Marvel?' one of them exclaimed. 'Gee whiz, you don't need us!' Wendell Crowley laughed as he described the above scene to me on his last trip through Arkansas in early February. His luggage had been lost on the flight in, all his medicine lost with it, he was facing open-heart surgery in two weeks for the second time—and yet this remarkable man was laughing. And that's the way he was. Full of the love of life, continually amazed that adults in all walks of life remembered Captain Marvel and, in so doing, remembered him. But no one who ever read Captain Marvel could forget him and no one who ever met Wendell Crowley could ever forget him.

On the other hand, at least one long-time comics creator was still active. Carl Barks, retired from his full-time job of writing and drawing duck comics for Western's Disney line, continued to do an occasional script for the Junior Woodchucks comic book. He wrote, for example, "[My] latest two stories are for the April [probably] Junior Woodchucks comic. One is a 13-pager about the JW's efforts to make a little money by gathering maple sap. The villains are Uncle Scrooge, Donald, the

Littlest Chickadees, and the Beagle Boys. The second story is a 12-pager of the Woodchucks' adventures cleaning up bottles and trash along the roadside. Magica de Spell is the menace. She has lost a bottle of Formula X somewhere along the road, and she bottles the nephews (literally) while she searches for her flasket. I am hoping to do two more Junior Woodchuck stories before the year ends. Have to watch my Social Security allowable earnings. My little paintings continue to sell at the one gallery where I exhibit, but I'll fix that. I've got a big idea for a 24x36 painting of horses and kids that will waste two months of my time and never sell to anybody." (His licensed paintings of ducks were, obviously, still to come.)

Mort Weisinger retired from his post as a DC editor in order to write a novel (which did quite well). News of that was followed almost at once by the news that Jack Kirby was leaving Marvel (where he had had enormous success and carved a niche as co-originator of such strips as **The Fantastic Four**) and going to DC. He was to be paid more per page than any previous penciller in comic-book history, and comics fans were stunned. The team of Lee-and-Kirby **was** Marvel Comics to many readers, who simply could not imagine some of their favorite strips without The King.

There were more endings and beginnings in 1970, some temporary, some permanent.

Dick Giordano announced that he was quitting editing for a time to concentrate on drawing. (This was **not** to be permanent, as he made clear.)

With 1970 came the announcement that Kryptonite would lose its effect on Superman, who was gradually to lose many of his powers. (The SF fanzine **Focal Point** quoted writer Denny O'Neil: "How would **you** like to plot adventure stories about a hero so powerful he makes God look like Wally Cox? **Conflict**, Cal. You can't have adventure stories without it, and it is a difficult commodity to manufacture when your title character can destroy a galaxy by merely **listening** hard.") Eventually, it was agreed that (by a plot device) Supes would be weakened to a third of the power he had gained by the late Sixties. Though she didn't get involved with that plot device, Supergirl nevertheless had powers only on a par with her relative; for the next little while, neither of them pushed planets around very much. (In more recent times, many writers on the assorted Super-stories seem to have forgotten all this, though some are still more careful than others to avoid using what had been solar-system-shattering abilities.)

© 1982 Marvel Comics

Jim Steranko formed Supergraphics and came out with the first volume of his **History of the Comics** with the statement that it would run to four volumes. A dozen years later, only two in the series have seen print, but we're looking forward to the rest, whenever they emerge.

Steve Canyon got married.

Stan Lee, Neal Adams, and several other comics creators banded together to form The Academy of Comic Book Arts; this was the first such official group of comic-book creators and marked that start of more-or-less formal gatherings of comics pros (as opposed to cartoonists, comic-strip artists, and animators, who had formed such groups years before).

Sol Brodsky formed Skyweld, a short-lived publishing house which brought out such mediocre titles as **Psycho**, **Nightmare**, and **Sundance Kid**. Skyweld's black-and-white magazines lasted longer than its color comics, but the line as a whole quickly died. There was just not much there to interest the hardcore comics buff, much less the casual comics buyer.

Probably the year's biggest comic-book success was a bold experiment by Roy Thomas. For some time, he had been campaigning for Marvel to begin a comic based on Robert E. Howard's Conan pulp stories from the early Thirties. There had been some continuing interest in the series (though little of a commercially exciting nature). The Hyborian Legion (a group of fans who studied the canon with humor and intelligence) had begun fifteen years earlier and was still in existence. But there were not enough in Howard's core of admirers to keep a comic book going, and Roy knew he would have to appeal to a wider audience. He was granted permission to do a comic only after much reluctance on the company's part.

The Showcase That Never Was

Showcase #94 was slated to present Jack Kirby's NEW GODS. Due to the fantastic mystique of that feature (Kirby at his very best) it began in its own title. DC decided to run new ideas in their own books; thus Showcase died, and there was no #94.

Ironically, the comic which later took the place of Showcase, First Issue Special, featured the return of the NEW GODS in its last issue, also.

The first issue of **Conan** in comic-book form came out in the summer of 1970 and, by issue #4, the title was monthly. Art on the first issue was unpretentious and even a bit crude; Barry Smith's work rapidly improved to an impressive level, and there are those who still feel that these were the best adaptations of Howard's character ever done. The strip has been such a success that recent news stories about the Conan film identify Conan as a comic-book character.

The top title for each publisher had the following circulation:

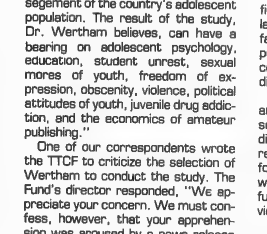
1,884,502 **Mad** (Mad)
515,356 **Archie** (Archie)
511,984 **Superman** (DC)
373,303 **Amazing Spider-Man** (Marvel)
318,577 **Dennis the Menace** (Fawcett)
283,968 **Tarzan** (Gold Key)
205,015 **Popeye** (King)

Showcase died with #93 ("Manhunter 2070"), and **Challengers of the Unknown** went with #77, but **Amazing Adventures** ("Inhumans") and **Astonishing Tales** ("Ka-Zar") began. Possibly the strangest of the comings and goings of comic-book titles occurred with Gilberton's **Classics Illustrated**. Despite the account given in Overstreet's current **Guide**, #169 was **not** the title's last issue. Issue #169 ("Negro Americans") had come out in the summer of 1969. It was not until our May 1970 issue of **Newfangles** that we announced the publication of #168 ("In Freedom's Cause" by G. A. Henty), with art by Reed Crandall and George Evans. [We were **Classics** followers and bought the titles as they appeared.] At that point, the magazine was listed as a quarterly, but it never saw another issue. The magazine ran through #169, but #168 was the last issue.

Another publication of interest to fans was announced as upcoming. Fans felt a certain amount of consternation at the news that The Twentieth Century Fund was financing a study of fanzines—by **Seduction of the Innocent** author Frederic Wertham. He had been asking for fanzines from fans and now, everyone was sure, he was going to "expose" fandom.

The Twentieth Century Fund Newsletter announced in its December 1969 issue: "Fanzines—amateur publications produced by adolescents that discuss comic strips, science fiction, sex, and the adult world—will be the subject for a Fund study under the direction of Frederic Wertham, a well-known psychiatrist. Dr. Wertham, who has been collecting these publications and studying this almost unknown sector of the underground press for many years hopes to produce a monograph that promises to be the first report on fanzines for either the academic or general reader and is part of the Fund's continuing interest in both professional and amateur media. The study will examine the content of fanzines, describe their production, and attempt to drew conclusions from what they reveal about an important segement of the country's adolescent population. The result of the study, Dr. Wertham believes, can have a bearing on adolescent psychology, education, student unrest, sexual mores of youth, freedom of expression, obscenity, violence, political attitudes of youth, juvenile drug addiction, and the economics of amateur publishing."

One of our correspondents wrote the TTOF to criticize the selection of Wertham to conduct the study. The Fund's director responded, "We appreciate your concern. We must confess, however, that your apprehension was aroused by a news release that did not accurately reflect Dr. Wertham's views of the subject. He



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actually holds considerable affection and admiration for the fanzine world and the values it expresses. We think that when the study appears you will find no grounds for complaint about lack of objectivity or insight. And in fairness to Dr. Wertham, we must point out that this research on violence is only a small aspect of a distinguished career in psychiatry."

[The book, when it came out, was an interesting one in which a long-lived science-fiction fandom was indiscriminately combined with the more recently emerged comics fandom to form a single sociological unit, which was then discussed with the confusion you might expect from such a viewpoint.]

The book which drew most of **our** attention in 1970, though, was Arlington House's **All in Color for a Dime**, the book Dick Lupoff and Don Thompson edited. Evolved from a series which had run in Dick's science-fiction fanzine **Xero** years before, the book had taken considerable time to put together and many, many months more to clear the rights for illustrations. Today's fans can find it most cheaply in the form of an Ace paperback, available from some dealers in comics memorabilia. The hardcover, in any case, was printed at the end of 1970, and it even had a half-page ad in the New York **Times Book Review** section. It was an elating way to end the year.

***

Next time: "Let There Be Light"

COMIC GOURMET

A WARRIOR BORN
IT'S A DREAM OF SNOW AND OF FIREBALLS. A DREAM OF DEATH AND NUMBING VERTIGO..
THERE IS NO FEAR AT FIRST ONLY THE EERIE KEENING OF THE WIND, THE SWIRLING, SILENT BLIZZARD AND THE COLD, SHARP THRILL OF ALTITUDE...
HE IS NOT ALONE. LIKE FIREBIRDS IN RED AND YELLOW, TWO OTHER FIGURES SOAR BESIDE HIM. HE CANNOT SEE THEIR FACES.
HIS POWER COURSES THROUGH HIS VEINS LIKE MOLTEN SILVER. HIS MUSCLES MOVE WITH PRECISE GRACE BENEATH HIS SKIN. HE KNOWS HE IS INVINCIBLE...
...IT IS THEN THAT HE SEES THE VAST GREY SHAPE THAT FLOATS IN THE CHURNING WHITE. IT IS THEN THAT THE FEAR STARTS...

A WARRIOR BORN

A year ago, at the 1981 British comic convention, Dez Skinn surprised the assembled fans with the announcement that he would not only be editing but also publishing a brand new comic magazine. The name of the new company embodied his intentions for this latest project: Quality. The name of the magazine itself suggested its commitment and determination to change the face of British comics: **Warrior**.

In Britain the comics scene has long been dominated by three companies; I.P.C., D.C. Thomson, and Marvel U.K. The first is a giant publishing empire, responsible for an extensive network of national newspapers and magazines ranging across the whole spread of the market. Not surprisingly, the I.P.C. comics line, though successful and extensive, is merely a small corner of the company's operation. D.C. Thomson is a Scottish firm which publishes newspapers in Scotland. Its comics line, including those venerable national institutions the 'Beano' and the 'Dandy', has formed the spiritual backbone of British comics for many years. Marvel U.K., a relative newcomer to the British marketplace, relies almost entirely on reprinting the proven successes (and some of the failures) of the American line, as well as showcasing popular T.V. shows in fleshy packages which form an uncomfortable hybrid of the American and British styles.

There have been independent attempts to crack the stranglehold these three companies have held since the early seventies, with varying degrees of success, and Dez Skinn himself has been involved with some of them. He's probably best known for his tempestuous and innovative period as editor of Marvel U.K., and he was once one of the guiding lights of British fandom. The previous closest professional analogue to his position at **Warrior** must have been his editorship of **House of Hammer**. This magazine-format collection of comic strips, articles, and news based on the horror film in general and Hammer films in particular was a direct forerunner of **Warrior**.

Skinn's qualifications are impeccable. He has extensive editorial experience with I.P.C., British **Mad**, and the previously mentioned stints with Marvel U.K. and **House of Hammer**. If any ex-fan was ever suited to apply practical knowledge to his fannish dreams and break the

mold of British comics it is Dez Skinn. To succeed as a new force on the newsstand, Warrior needed creative talent of commensurate experience and ability. When the first issue debuted in March 1982, it was clear at a glance that this talent had been found.

Recently a few names from Britain have come to the attention of American comic readers. Brian Bolland, best-known artist on the cult Judge Dredd strip, now drawing D.C.'s high-visibility direct sales project Camelot 3000 and John Bolton, the artist on Marada/Kull, have each been the focus of considerable attention on both sides of the Atlantic. Bolton and Dave Gibbons, D.C.'s choice of penciller for the revival of The Creeper, had work in the first issue of **Warrior**. Bolland made his bow in #3. These familiar names are only the proverbial tip of the iceberg, for today, probably more so than ever before there is considerable breadth and depth to the pool of talent available to the British comics publisher.

Warrior #1 saw the appearance of five of the magazine's six regular features. The format of Warrior is a sensible amalgam of the very different American and British styles of comic publication. A magazine with glossy covers, printed in black-and-white on newsprint-type paper, it features six or eight page installments of a number of continuing stories starring generally unrelated characters, as well as some single-issue and one-shot tales. It is published monthly, except for a little hiccup between issues two and three.

The regular features range right across the spectrum of fantasy literature. "Laser Eraser & Pressbutton" by Pedro Henry and Steve Dillon is an anarchic and violent adventure in the far future, space opera with a humorous twist, starring a psychotic cyborg and a ruthless lady assassin. Its off-the-wall humor and freewheeling, cynical style have established it firmly as one of the most popular strips in **Warrior**. The cyborg, Pressbutton, originated in a British music-weekly paper called **Sounds**. No doubt cross-fertilization of readership figured in his choice for inclusion, but the strip maintains its place purely on merit.

'V for Vendetta', perhaps the most successful strip in **Warrior** on purely aesthetic terms as well as being the most critically acclaimed, deals with a

mysterious individual and his fight against the repressive, fascist government of Britain, circa 1997. The art by David Lloyd is grim and dour, built up from stark brooding slabs of black and white, relentlessly joyless like the regime it reflects. It matches, too, the depressing and genuinely chilling script, by Alan Moore. V...plays heavily on current fears over current political trends towards extremism in the left and right.

'The Spiral Path', written and drawn by Steve Parkhouse, is a tale, to quote from **Warrior 1**, "from the days of legends, a time of magic, mythical heroes and the roots of folklore". Despite this, and in common with the great majority of the work in **Warrior**, the strip is intelligent, provocative and utterly removed from the fey, romanticized imagery which too frequently mars this type of story. Drawn in a fine, highly detailed style, reminiscent but not derivative of Barry Smith's last comic-book work, the epic is firmly rooted in the mud, rain, and grinding misery which must have comprised much of the pre-civilization tribesman's life.

Probably the biggest artistic risk Dez Skinn took with the creation of **Warrior** was the revival of a half-forgotten hero from the 1950's: Marvelman. The hero's history is convoluted and confused. An article in **Warrior 1** gives a rather sanitized version in fair detail for those who are interested, but suffice it is to say that when Fawcett was forced to close down its Captain Marvel operation, supplies of the Big Red Cheese's adventures were no longer available to the British company which had been reprinting them. Soon, in that same British comic, there appeared a new, British hero named Marvelman. Any superhero-type character would have been a risk in a magazine of **Warrior's** nature; it could easily negate the feeling of authenticity the rest of the strips strove so hard to achieve. The use of such a watered-down, derivative character made failure seem doubly likely. That the result was a successful application of the same rigorous standards of literacy and authenticity is a credit to the wit and imagination of Marvelman's creative team, Alan Moore and Gary Leach. They successfully transplanted the fifties hero into the 1980s in an intensely realistic fashion. In a way seldom, if ever, seen before, the strip evokes the illusion of our world as it would be if a superhero really existed. From Marvelman's married home life, through the public's fear and revulsion on seeing his power demonstrated, to the Government's awareness of the

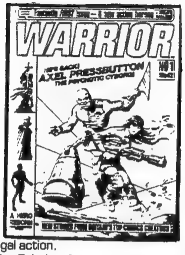
ZZAPFFF!
THEY'RE HEADING THIS WAY... THERE'S HUNDREDS OF THEM!
NO, MY FRIEND... YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE ARMIES OF CORMAC CARADOC AND ARTIUK COMBINED...
AND THEY ARE NUMBERED IN THOUSANDS ... THOUSANDS!!

potential threat, the strip rings astonishingly true. Against all odds Marvelman has established itself as one of the best, and most popular strips in the magazine.

"Father Shandor, Demon Stalker' rounded out the regular features which debuted in issue 1. As you'd expect, it features a priest involved in exorcism and black magic. Set in the last century, it boasts some excellent artwork from John Bolton. Unfortunately, though, it's reprinted from **House of Hammer**. In **Warrior #1** there was also the first of a projected three-part series based on legendary Crusader Prester John, also drawn by Bolton, and a short S. F. piece illustrated by Dave Gibbons. Issue 2 saw the unveiling of the final regular strip, 'The Madman', a bizarre dimension-hopping parable of sanity and madness written and drawn by ex-Marvel U.K. art director and sometime contributor to Warren comics, Paul Neary. This has been the basic line-up of all issues so far, although a number of new series have been announced for the future, presumably as space becomes available.

It hasn't all been plain sailing, though. There was the two-month gap between issues 2 and 3. Then the announced Summer Special had to be shelved on advice from the distributors lest too much similar material should split **Warrior**'s as yet unestablished audience or, even worse, frighten off uncertain newsdealers. Instead, the already prepared material found its way into issue 4, disrupting the ongoing continuity of several strips. **Warrior 4** also went to the shops with the subheading "Summer Special", enabling it to reach certain vacation outlets, especially seaside resorts. Perhaps the most serious threat to **Warrior**'s continued well-being has come not from technical problems but from its open-minded editorial policy.

In issue 1, Dez Skinn stated his intentions with a quotation from John F. Kennedy, "The best road to progress is freedom's road". In **Warrior**'s case, this means artistic and creative freedom. The creators and writers own their own characters and are free to develop them in whatever way they see fit, subject only to the editorial veto of Skinn himself. This freedom has led to the inclusion of a number of controversial elements, including nudity, 'strong' language, sexual deviance, and extreme (for comics) violence. So far general critical opinion has agreed that these aspects have been sublimated to the dictates of the story, without sensationalism, and in the furtherence of genuine artistic endeavour. Nevertheless, there is a widespread feeling that including these elements, particularly in the absence of an obvious moral tone ["V for Vendetta" in particular has been criticized for giving fascist characters a chance to air their views without overt editorial condemnation] will lead to public complaint and possibly even illegal action.



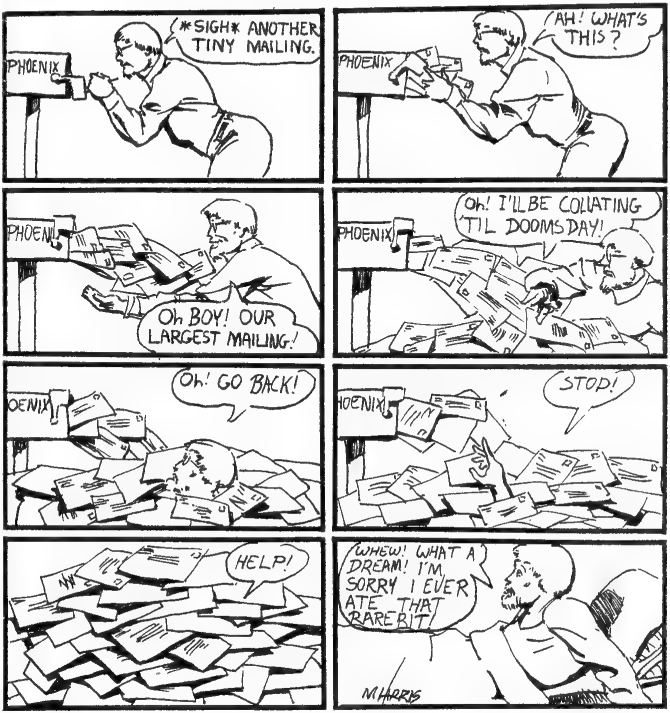
In Britain, far more so than in Europe or America, the comic form is regard as virtually exclusively for children. Consequently there is no space on the newsstand readily prepared for **Warrior**. The only comic magazine to have successfully escaped from this typecasting is **Mad**, which has had more than twenty years to establish its unique position. **Warrior** is not an underground or 'ground-level' publication, but an attempt to establish a place in the mainstream comic market for quality, mature work, and as such is carried not only by comic and fantasy book-stores but also by traditional newsstand outlets. If the magazine is unable to establish its own niche on the stands, and is instead displayed (as it usually is at present) with the I.P.C. and D.C. Thomson children's comics, it can only be a matter of time before an outraged parent raises a loud complaint.

Despite this, the general outlook is bright. At the 1982 British comic convention, Dez Skinn again hosted a question and answer panel on **Warrior**. He announced that the magazine's sales to America are in the region of 10,000 copies per issue. This suggests that should the magazine fail on the British newsstands, it could still survive on American sales. Naturally British fans hope that **Warrior** can make itself a success at home as well as abroad, but it is at least reassuring to know that the future of this excellent magazine is relatively assured.

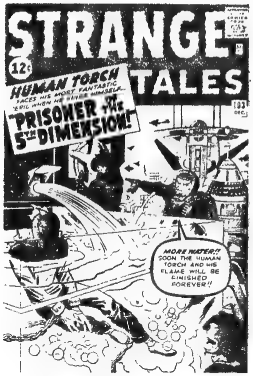
D.S. DURSLEY

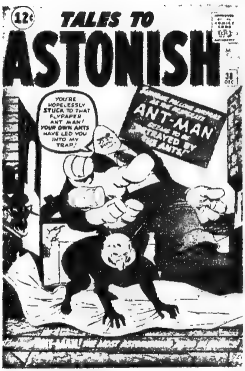
The Phoenix Phunnies, by Mike Harris

DREAM OF THE RAREBIT FIEND



20 Years Ago this Month


STRANGE TALES
12¢
HUMAN TORCH
PRISONER OF THE 5TH DIMENSION!
MORE MATER! SOON THE HUMAN TORCH AND HIS ELEMENTAL FOE SHALL BE ANNIHILATED FOREVER!



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"For the NEW Era in Comics"

MM1

AN INTERVIEW with the Romitas – Jr. and Jr. Jr.

By: Mike Harris

CF: You are best known for your work on Spider-Man. What work had you done prior to that book? In other words, what is the origin of John Romita Sr.?

SR.: I had fifteen years in comics before Spider-Man. I worked for Stan before it was called Marvel Comics, from 1950 through part of 1957, and then I went to DC.

CF: What type of work were you doing during the '50s?

SR.: In the early '50s, I tried Capt. America for almost a year. It was a short experiment in super-heroes. I did westerns, war, mysteries—they were called "weird" stories; they weren't called horror stories, they were like "twilight zone" episodes and romance for awhile. When I worked for DC, I did romance for about seven or eight years.

CF: Who were you working with at DC then?

SR.: It was mostly with female editors. I worked with Phyllis Reed for about three or four years and then, for a while, I worked with a guy named Jack Miller. That's about the time I left to come back to Stan.

CF: What year was that?

SR.: In '65.

CF: What brought you back to Marvel?

SR.: A combination of things. The DC inventory had grown, and for some reason, I wasn't sought after by the adventure department. They thought of me as a romance artist. I asked around and the adventure department didn't have anything so I came over to Stan. I gave him a call and he said to come on over, and that same dey I was given a book to do.

CF: What assignment was that?

SR.: I started on a Don Heck Avengers job. I inked it. In fact, I was looking for just inking, to relax and not kill myself. After that first Avengers job, I pencilled a Daredevil. It was Daredevil #12 with Jack Kirby layouts, and I finished it. The first two stories were from Jack Kirby layouts.

CF: What was the first book that you actually laid out by yourself?

SR.: I guess it was #14; I think I did it from scratch.

CF: What was your first involvement with the Spider-Man character?

SR.: About six months after I started Daredevil, Stan called me into his office and gave me a stack of Spider-Man books. He said that this was about three years of Spider-Man. First, he had me do a two-part Daredevil with Spider-Man as his guest star to see if I could handle the character. He called me in and told me he wanted me to get familiar with the character in case I would have to do it in a pinch. You see, he and Ditko were disagreeing on a couple of things and it sounded as though Ditko wasn't going to stay. A couple of months later, I was doing Spider-Man. I guess he liked the two Daredevil jobs.

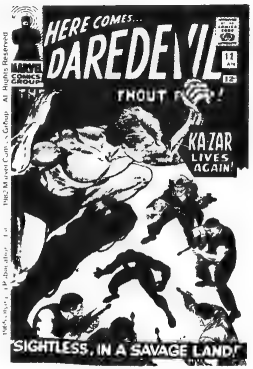
CF: When you took over the character, it was fairly well established. Would you have preferred a less developed character—someone you could have more input into?

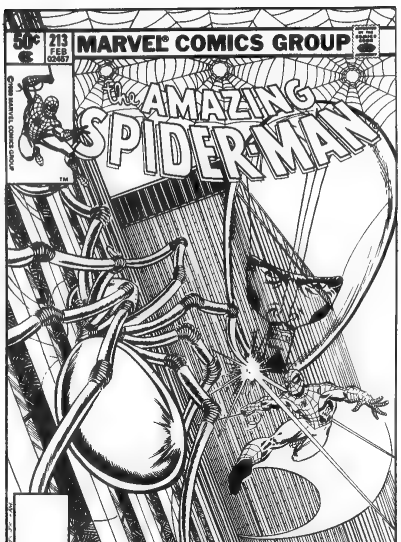
SR.: Strangely, I had never heard of it. Even though we used to talk about Marvel at DC, we used to have discussions, I never really saw Spider-Man until Stan showed me that book. Even when I was here for six months, I hadn't seen a Spider-Man book. When he showed them to me, I was surprised and he said, "Would you be further surprised if I told you that was our second best selling book?" I said I was shocked. It was a different kind of style than I had ever seen. I was trying to use the same general approach, thin line, and the same kind of layouts because Stan wanted it. He loved the storytelling and the way Ditko approached it. For the first year, maybe longer, he really didn't like everything I was doing. He didn't like the way I did the Peter Parker character. He kept asking me, "Can't you do more of this? Can't you do more of that?" I did the best I could and then the fans used to give me trouble. For years it was a big joke. We used to get letters all the time, "He's not Steve Ditko. What's he doing on the character? He doesn't look right." I just figured, what the hell, if Stan wants to pay me for it, I'll do it as long as I'm needed on it. I thought it was a temporary job.

CF: I see. And how long did it last?

SR.: I was on it about six years. All during the time that John Jr. was growing up, he was suffering with Peter Parker. He was asking me not to be so hard on Peter Parker. Give him a break every once in awhile. It's funny, he was already telling stories when he was about fifteen. I mean, we used to discuss the plots. He and his brother would give me "input". Many times I would use their thoughts.

CF: John, was this your first exposure to comic books?





JR.: No, the romance jobs he worked on were my first exposure. I didn't have any idea what he was doing. All I knew was that he was drawing pictures and lettering and was stuck up in the attic for hours.

SR.: They thought I was just a guy who didn't have a job.

JR.: No, no...This did not make him happy.

SR.: I **wasn't** too happy. It was hard work.

JR.: I think my eyes widened—my eyes tripled in size—when I saw that Ka-Zar/Daredevil job [Daredevil #12]. I was fascinated by it; I still have that cover. Since then, it's been fascinating and it still is. I still get a kick out of it.

SR.: It was a lot of fun to see your eyes light up. When I got into super-heroes, suddenly he started paying attention to my work.

CF: Were you active in comics fandom?

JR.: No. I never was. I just looked and I read, and I came up to the office to visit, but it was not anything short of awe. I never really became involved in anything else. I was a fan, but not involved in anything but reading and enjoying.

CF: Your first Spider-Man work, your first Marvel work I should say, was a Spider-Man back-up which your father inked.

JR.: The first popular work I did as far as the character. I did work for the British Department through Marie Severin and Larry Lieber. Same characters but a different format. The Spider-Man thing was the first thing I did that was for the American books.

CF: Were you getting credit for the work you were doing with Marie Severin?

JR.: No, I was, more or less, doing sketches for covers and sketches for second splashes. When they broke the books up into two stories, they needed a second splash and sketches for those. I did an occasional cover, and it wasn't much, so I didn't get credit for it.

SR.: That was a hell of a training ground. Those were excellent. That was one of the best breaks we got, that

you were able to do all those characters. You gained a facility with all of them. He was able to do everything. He'd do the splashes. He and a couple of the guys, Bob Budiansky...

JR.: Bob Budiensky was working as an assistant editor. He was doing work for the American Department and the British Department.

SR.: It was a good training ground for all of you.

JR.: It was excellent. I thank Marie Severin for that.

CF: How did you feel when John wanted to go into comics?

SR.: I used to tell him to think of something else. I couldn't believe he even wanted it because he used to see me work through the night and weekends while the family was out having a barbeque—I would work and he knew that.

CF: You were not supportive of John's drawing?

SR.: I tried to talk him out of it because I really thought that was not a good way to make a living. I never got very much money out of it, just long hours. He must have seen that, but he just didn't want to think of anything else. I told him if you want to do it, do it, but I would advise you not to.

JR.: He advised me to become a construction worker.

SR.: I told him to get into a business with fresh air and I even told him to get a pension job; a job with some future. At this time, we didn't have a pension in our business.

CF: Do you now?

SR.: Yeah, now we do.

CF: Most of your work in comics, other than the Iron Man issues, has been on Spider-Man, the Annual being the most recent. Do you find it difficult to work on a book that has your father's imprint on it that strongly?

JR.: Without outside influence, I'm hard on myself because I always want to do what he would have done. When I'm working on the book, I picture a page the way he would have done it. Outside of Spider-Man, if I do anything else, I'll picture it the way John Buscema would have done it. I guess I'm looking at the way he's done all the characters. When I'm doing Spider-Man, I picture my father's way of doing it.

CF: Do you have any other influences other than Buscema and your father?

JR.: I don't think I want any other influences. I think that's pretty good company. I don't think anybody else is necessary.

CF: John, when you were first starting out, who were you looking at?

SR.: In comic books at the time, there were only a few guys...I used to love Kubert's stuff, never knowing that Kubert was practically my age. I always thought of him as an older guy, but I found out he was my age; I couldn't believe it. I was in high school when he was doing work. He was 16. I was looking at Kubert's Hawkman saying I'd love to be as good as that guy someday, and he was my age. I used to love George Tusaka's nice free and easy stuff, and then Will Eisner, but Will Eisner was out of comic books when I met him. I always liked Jack Kirby, but I never pictured myself in that vein. I used to picutre myself as more the Milton Caniff [Terry and the Pirates] type.

CF: More realistic?

SR.: If I had been on my own, trying to make my own direction rather then ghosting somebody else's work, that's the direction I probably would have gone in.

CF: I see. Was Caniff a big influence on you?

SR.: Caniff was the biggest influence on me. If I had gone into comic strip work, I would have just been a mimic of Caniff.

JR.: I think Frank Robbins shows up, if I'm not mistaken.

SR.: Well, Robbins sprang from Caniff.

CF: How would you evaluate the work you were doing then comparing it to now? What changes do you see? What kind of evolution?

SR.: When I started, an artist would get a script and illustrate it as closely as he could to the descriptions in the script. In 1965, when Stand told me he was not going to give me a script, that I was going to work from a half page plot or even a verbal plot that we would discuss, I thought he was joking because I didn't know where to start, but then I realized even though it was painful [I thought I would never live through the second story], this was the way comics should be done. John saw me suffer through it. I used to ask them to help me. I used to say, "What do you think of this", "What do you think of that", "What should I do here", and they would give me some good tips. He and his brother had a lot of good ideas. I also got the feeling of a young person's attitude on stories through them, and it was a big help. I don't know what would have happened if I had been a bachelor without kids.

JR.: He's joking.

SR.: I'm not so sure. I think it was important to me. Of course, I had Stan, who had a great knack for knowing what young readers like. He was constantly molding me and we would discuss every job in minute detail. How to pace it. I suddenly realized that I was a storyteller, and that the artist had to be a storyteller. The other beautiful thing was that the visual approach makes the stories better. If you get the written approach, the artist is limited by what he reads.

CF: You definitely prefer to work very closely with a writer?

SR.: Yes. Even if he works from a script, I think I would like to have some imput. I'll help work out a plot that I think is visual. I used to joke with Stan, say "I don't see any pictures". If we were talking for 15 or 20 minutes , and nothing was popping into my mind. Then I knew we were on the wrong track. If I **saw** pictures, then that's probably going to make a good story. If it's possible, I'd like to work with the writer. I think you work with writers, John, don't you?

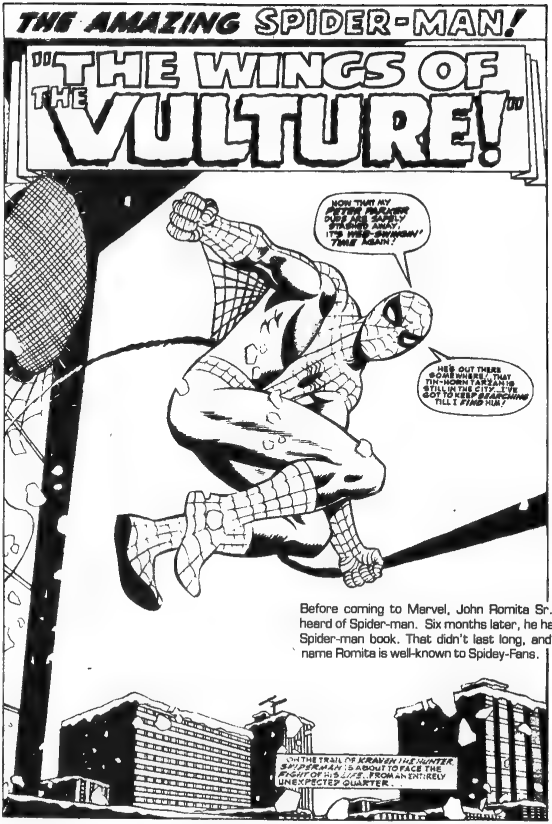
JR.: No, not as closely...

SR.: ...Because Roger's out of town?

JR.: Well, they send me plots and ask me to add my own ideas if I want. Most of the time, Roger gets exactly what I imagine is workable. Anything I add is secondery—cute little bits—but, most of the time, the plots they give me...

SR.: Pretty tight...

JR.: They have what they need in there, and without me


THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN!
"THE WINGS OF THE VULTURE!"
WOW! THAT MY SPIDER POWER DOES ME GOOD! I'M FEELING SWELL! IT'S SPIDER-WOMAN'S TIME AGAIN!
HE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE... THAT TIN-HORN TARZAN! IS STILL IN THE CITY... I'VE GOT TO KEEP SEARCHING TILL I FIND HIM!
ON THE TRAIL OF KRAVEN THE HUNTER SPIDER-MAN IS ABOUT TO FACE THE FIGHT OF HIS LIFE... FROM AN ENTIRELY UNEXPECTED QUARTER...
© 1982 Marvel Comics

Before coming to Marvel, John Romita Sr. had never heard of Spider-man. Six months later, he hadn't seen a Spider-man book. That didn't last long, and today, the name Romita is well-known to Spidey-Fans.

THEN, A FEW MINUTES LATER, AT GOOD OL' E.S.U....
HI, GWEN! SAY... YOU SURE LOOK GREAT WEARING YOUR HAIR THAT WAY.
WHY, THANK YOU, PETE!
IT'S JUST A CASUAL LITTLE STYLE... WHICH TOOK ALL MORNING TO ARRANGE!
OOOH BOY! JUST MY LUCK...!
GWEN'S IN A MELLOW MOOD... AND I FEEL LIKE AN ACCIDENT...LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO HAPPEN!

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rocking the boat, I'll give them what they want. I've had some input at times, and I'll be doing that in the future.

CF: When you were on Iron Man, Micheline and Layton had a lot of input on the book. Did you also contribute a lot in terms of plot?

JR.: At almost the same time they knew pretty much what they wanted. And without causing any trouble, I gave them just what they wanted most of the time because Bob, as an artist, knew what was good visually. He added to it, to whatever Dave had, and if there was anything too confusing, if there was anything too crowded, I would tell them. Without any squawks, they would say, okay, what do you want to do?

CF: You enjoyed working with them?

JR.: Oh yes, David Micheline was one of the better writers, and the same with Roger. I've been lucky. They're good writers and Bob had great ideas.

CF: What other inkers or writers do you like working with?

JR.: Inkers? Well, I haven't had that many different inkers to work with, so without seeming too biased, I'd say working with John Romita Sr. is the most fun I had working on a book. Bob Layton was at the stage that I was at when I started! He was just starting. He had only worked with DC before that, and I thought we were cruder at certain points. I thought we worked together very well because of the character. I don't know if we could have done anything on Spider-Man yet, because we had a different combination of styles than Spider-Man. I remember it worked well for us because of Bob's inking style. As far as writers go, Micheline and Stern are the only two guys I've worked with, aside from Bill Mantlo and Denny O'Niel for a short time.

CF: Is there anyone you would like to work with specifically?

JR.: Sure. Let's see. Name every inker who's ever worked on a book and I'll say I liked it. Joe Sinnot inked one of the Spider-Man books, and that was a lot of fun because Joe Sinnot had this aura around him because of the Fantastic Four. I don't think our styles fit. I just felt that if I had worked on Fantastic Four, it would have been a lot more fun. I would like to have Klaus ink my stuff, I'd like to have Terry Austin ink my stuff, anybody and everybody. I would love to handle my stuff just to see what would happen. Does that cover everyone?

CF: Yes! Your title is Special Projects Editor and Art Director. What does that entail?

SR.: I'm not editing, I'm Art Director. We discuss all of our projects with Sol Brodsky and Dave Kraft, who is really the script editor. My job is really to try to keep the quality up on the art, on the special projects.

CF: What special projects are coming up?

SR.: We run the gamut. We do industrial comics for individual advertizers. A department store might order a comic book from us. As advertising, it would be inserted into a newspaper for one Sunday, and whatever it is, two million readers get the comic book free. We get a lot of good reaction. We've done about six or seven of those, in various towns. We did two for Dallas, one with the Dallas Cheerleaders as guest stars with Spider-Man.

CF: I'm sure Spidey enjoyed that.

SR.: I hope the general readers get the chance to see some of the custom comics. They've got a lot of nice twists.

CF: The one I remember was a give away in the New York Area, for one of the detergent companies.

SR.: Right.

CF: Yeah, it was a reprint of Spider-Man's origin.

SR.: We did original material for Aim toothpaste. We just did a second one for Aim in conjunction with the American Dental Association. We just put out a book for the American Cancer Society against smoking.

CF: There was also one that came out on family planning, I believe?

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SR.: Yeah, the Spider-Man book on family planning; Ross Andru did the art. That was the first of the special projects. We had done things casually in our department before. We did a Fantastic Four, which I think has just gone into print again for a young model builder's club. This book is going to be reprinted again, so it's a Fantastic Four story tailored to the model industry.

CF: Is that a give away or is it sold in a shop?

SR.: I think that's a give away. All of these are. We did one for Acme boots and one for Dingo boots. We did some game books, we did the famous energy book with the Campbell kids and the energy department, which got us a lot of publicity.

CF: There was also an animated short for that. That was shown in a number of movie theaters with Captain America.

SR.: Yes, I never saw that. I wish I had. I'd love to see it.

CF: I've seen it. It's cute, lasts about two minutes.

SR.: We put out all sorts of things. We've done a series of Smurfs in mini-size, which we adapted into regular comics and a treasury. We had our own artists do it under the supervision of the creator, and we're doing a line of children's books and coloring books now for our own Marvel books division.

CF: What about the graphic novels? Do they come under your jurisdiction?

SR.: No. That's Jim Shooter's department.

CF: John, the current work you're doing in comics...do you see any changes coming in what you're doing?

JR.: In the artwork or the stories?

CF: In general.

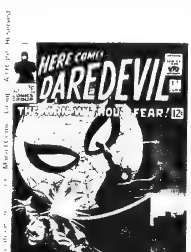
JR.: No change from what we're doing now. What we're doing now is a change from what was done before. I don't think they're going to vary from what we're doing now. They went to get back to the old magic that Stan had. I don't think they can do it drastically because I don't know if there's any one thing that can bring it back all of a sudden. They have to touch all of the bases.

CF: I see. Do you feel that there are any changes you'd **like** to see?

JR.: I'd like to see it in my artwork. That hasn't happened fast enough for me. I'm basically a red-neck when it comes to my artwork and my storytelling. I'd like to see a little more power in Spider-Man. He's always done a little bit "tongue-in-cheek", and Roger Stern does that a little bit, and that's good, but I'd like to see more intensity in Spider-Man. He's always had things go wrong for him. I'd like to see him do things right, a little more intensely which means, I guess, to be a little more violent, but nothing bloody and gory. I'd like to see him either get beat soundly once in a while or beat somebody soundly. It's never really definite. The "tongue-in-cheek" stuff is a good combination of things, but I'm a little violent. I'd like to see him do some powerful things. And I want to try to get that in there. Maybe I'll just add it subtly, I don't know.

CF: Would you like to see the comics that you're working on or that people under you are working on, change?

SR.: It goes through a **constant** evolution. It **has** to. There's always a gradual change. When Stan left and had other editors take over, his worst fear was that everyone was just going to rehash the same stuff over and over again. [That's not happened; Shooter has made very sure of that.] There are a lot of DC books that look the same today as they did 15 years ago. They don't change. I don't want to single out anybody, but they don't look that different. Even though they think they're doing different stuff. We're constantly on guard. We make them look like **1982**, so that it doesn't look like it just could've been lifted out of '75 and printed again. When John does a story and Sterno writes a plot; they're constantly thinking '82. The Annual we did, the scenics, the locales, the characterization, they're all geared for 1982. They cannot be mistaken for a 1975 or a 1970 book, which I think is vital. When I was working on the strip with Stan, his worst fear was that it was going to look like rehashed 1970 stuff. Whatever is current, if it's the concorde in the air, as opposed to just another jet, or if it's a modern bus, as opposed to a bus that looks like 1935.



JR.: Another problem is fashion...

SR.: When Gene Colan does a car, you know it's up to date. When other guys do it, it looks like a '35 Chevy. Some guys just don't know how to update cars. What we like to do is have the reader believe what he's reading.

CF: I noticed on the strip that you changed Peter Parker; the hair got a little longer.

SR.: That was Stan.

CF: That was **Stan**?

SR.: He felt everybody's going around with long hair, and why does Peter Parker still look like a square. So we changed it in the strip. We tried to show him with jeans and boots and the girls with current clothing. When I first did it, I didn't think it looked like Peter Parker, but now I've gotten used to it.

CF: Back when you first started with Marvel and you were working with Stan, was he very easy to work with?

SR.: He was very demanding, but he would always exert

himself. He didn't just sit back and say, it's not good, do better. He'd go over all the histrionics, all the dramatics, all the sense of the storytelling. He would never settle for anything. If we had a moment's time, he would use it. We were always late in those days and the reason was that Stan was not satisfied. He was the best thing that ever happened to me because for all those years before that, I would just turn in the work and not explore the possibilities.

CF: During the time that you've worked at Marvel, have

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you seen any major changes in the company and the way things are done?

SR.: Oh, we've had a huge change because we went from a privately owned company, really a small group. When I first joined them in '65, the production department was about four people: Stan, Sol Brodsky, Flo Steinberg, and Marie Severin. That was '65 and in the early '70s, was when we were absorbed by a conglomerate. It was a business change because we became part of a corporation; we don't have the free-wheeling aspects we used to have. Now we have an official business format to follow, and it certainly is different.

CF: Do you miss the old set-up?

SR.: In a lot of ways, I do, but in a lot of ways, we're much better off nowadays.

CF: How old are you?

JR.: I just turned 26, August 7th.

CF: That makes you about the medium age of comic book people.

JR.: I'd like to say I'm still young because I hope I have a lot of time to develop.

CF: I think most people tend to come in during their mid-20's. John Byrne came in when he was about 28.

JR.: I really don't know. I believe so, but there are guys who started, when I started, in their early 20's.

CF: Joe Rubinstein was very, very young. He was about 22.

SR.: Joe was connected with Neal's studio so he was, you know, on the fringes of the business and doing artwork whenever he could help out. That was a great opportunity. The same with John. First, sketches, then fill in pages, then 2 years in our production department. That's something most people don't know.

JR.: Three years; it was three.

SR.: Three years.

CF: Just doing mechanicals and paste up?

SR.: He was really co-ordinating the Conan book for Roy.

JR.: I was the liason between Roy and the company.

SR.: You also did the cover layouts, the interior corrections...

JR.: Garbage man. That was a lot of fun because I got to work with Roy. When it came into the office, I would touch up and spot, anything. I'd just look at it and absorb it. Tony DeZuniga's inking...I was co-ordinating, I guess is a good word for it.

SR.: You were overseeing the stuff. You would get the pencils, get them back again, get them inked, then do all the corrections that you had time for. It was a big project, Savage Sword...

JR.: Savage Sword of Conan.

SR.: The black and white magazine.

CF: You mentioned Joe Rubinstein before. He inked you on a couple of covers, didn't he?

JR.: Yes, he did. I like his inking. If he had more time to do things, he probably could do more of my stuff, but there's so much to do. So few people and so little time.

CF: Do you see yourself doing any non-comic book work: graphic novels or illustration?

JR.: A graphic novel, I believe, is coming up. I'm looking forward to doing it. I hope I will do it soon. I can say certainly I will be doing one, and I'd like to say that John Romita Sr. will ink it, but who knows what his schedule is.

SR.: That one I'm going to do.

JR.: Okay! So, I'll say John Romita Sr. is going to ink it.

SR.: I would love to do the regular book, but I don't physically think I can do it.

JR.: I don't want him to do anything that's going to take him away from **his** work, and I don't think he wants to do that!

CF: What got you into the studio book that you worked on with Dick Giordano, Frank McLaughlin, and Sal Amendola?

SR.: He just asked me if I would help out with a couple of pages of drawings, and I said sure, if it'll help. I didn't have any idea that I was going to be listed as one of the creators with a picture on the back of the book. A couple of drawings turned out to be a dozen drawings.

JR.: That's your fault. You don't know how to say no to anybody.

SR.: He said he would give me plenty of time. Okay, I've heard a lot of people say that they think the book helps them. I'm very glad...

CF: It does.

SR.: I'm very pleased to be connected with any instruction book that Dick Giordano's involved with. When he told me Dick was going to be doing it, I thought, well, that's good company.

JR.: Maybe I should read that...[laughter] It might help me out.

SR.: It's very basic.

CF: Sal Amendola is using it as a textbook for his perspective class at the school of visual arts.

SR.: That's very interesting. The next book I think is going to be even more extensive. I told him I would help him out with that too because I don't want to change their luck.

CF: Dick places a lot of stock in letting new people into the business through programs that he's started at DC. Do you also find that this is important?

SR.: My attitude on that is that I'd hate to go recruiting people with the prospect of them doing work in the business where there's not room for more than a few new people at a time in the whole industry. When we were looking to form a guild, we only had about three or four hundred people producing comics. They're all still in the business, so there are very few openings. I hate to tell a kid that if he will study this book, he will get into comics because there's a lot of competition out there. I'm reading requests and submissions every day. Hundreds of samples come in. Nobody can promise all those people work.

CF: If you had to sum up your biggest contribution to comics, what would you say?

JR.: Me! No, don't write that...[laughs].

SR.: I think he's right. I always thought of myself as an illustrator hired to illustrate a story. I never set out to influence anybody, and I never set out to make a contribution. I was in this business for a living and I've managed to make a living for 32 years in comics. All I ever wanted out of it was a living wage. If I've contributed anything, it's been just a coincidence.

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THE SPIDER AND I

BY Sam Kujava

The latest news from the Mighty Marvel Comics Group is that their stellar attraction is in a sales slump. Temporary, I'm sure. I always thought that Spider-Man was impervious to consumer disinterest, like Superman. No matter how ridiculous the plot, how hollow the dialog, how out of character the characters seemed, certain super-star super-heroes could weather any circulation storm. Simply put, that which makes Spider-Man a classic, unique archetype can outlast and endure all the various mishandling by certain writers and artists of the newer Marvel Bullpen.

That the drop in sales should occur now is especially disconcerting to longtime fans as well as, I'm sure, Editor Tom DeFalco. Under his guidance, a younger stable of creative people have made the twenty-year old wall crawler as exciting, or at least as promising as he had been a decade before. There were times, in the not-too-distant past, that I no longer cared if Spidey lived or died. Remember the courtship and almost marriage between Aunt May and Doc Ock?...The Peter Parker and Gwen Stacy clones?...The one-too-damn-many incarnations of the Green Goblin? This kind of unbelievable drivel went on for so long that I quietly suffered and wondered if there wasn't some sort of yin/yan formula for long-running titles...the **greater** the heights, the more **dismal** the fall. Spider-Man seemed to go on during all this time, as a top-selling comic book, if not as a **well-done** comic book. I can remember when it was **both**.

I wasn't in at the beginning, so I can't sentimentally recall any charge at picking up **Amazing Fantasy** #15 or **Amazing Spider-Man** #1 from a crowded newsstand. Comic books were considered "junk" reading material in the Kujava household; it took over two years of wheedling and whining and generally wearing down my dear old mom before I could get my hands on my very first comic. It was another year before I felt that I had outgrown DC's Superman Family titles and dared to try the decidedly different Marvel Comics Group. A shiny, all-silver quarter garnered a

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fat, 72-page copy of **Marvel Tales** #3. Among the stories was a reprint of **Amazing Spider-Man** #6, by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko. I had come in late, but as fresh as they come.

The blurb on the splash page proclaimed, "It is common knowledge that Spider-Man is the most successful new super-hero since the Fantastic Four! [Who were they?] This, the latest, and possibly the greatest of all his adventures, will show you **why** the mysterious masked teenager has become America's super sensation!" I had only to read the 21-page story to be convinced of the sincerity of that statement!

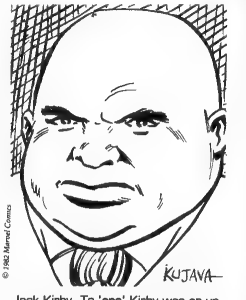
After glimpsing the faraway menace of the Lizard, we switch to the home turf of our hero, get a chance to see him in action against **ordinary** crooks, and meet the alter ego and his friends and supporting players, all in the first third of the story. Then it was off to a strange, uninviting Everglades. I went along for the ride, and a rollercoaster ride it was! A monster that wasn't **quite** what it seemed to be, a seesew battle and confrontation that ultimately wasn't as important as Peter Parker's scientific expertise in preparing an antidote for the hapless Dr. Connors, and Parker's courageous gesture to keep the whole thing secret, at the expense of his very newsworthy photos. In my first, complete-in-one-issue saga I saw, and gloried in, more sides to what makes a super-hero, and a man, than I ever evidenced in an eight-page Superman or Batman episode. For the first time in my short collecting career I was absolutely looking forward to the next issue of a particular title. And the next, and the next...

Helpful to this 'bring-'em-back-again' formula was Ditko's method of weaving continuous, **interesting** plotlines through each issue. The immediate story itself was still complete in one issue, having a definite beginning, middle and end. Parker's life had become so interesting that even a one-page look at a new potential danger or further twist to Peter's mixed-up life was enough to get you to pick up the following edition.

First loves are hard to top, and I'll always rate **Amazing Spider-Man** #6 highly, but even I had to admit that each succeeding issue got better, and more involving for both Spidey **and** the reader. Ditko was on one of the rolls of his career, and it lasted for over three satisfying years. Steve reached a peak with the trilogy in #31 - 33..."If This Be My Destiny", "Man On A Rampage", and "The Final Chapter". Peter had graduated from high school and entered college where he was to meet new people that were to intertwine with his already cheotic lifestyle. Our man in the spider suit would never again be the same shy, hard-luck kid we all identified with through those difficult teen years. Like his readership, Spidey was growing up, and it made for more compelling entertainment. Our hero had to go through his rite of passage, his test of manhood, and for a dizzying, breakneck, three-issue marathon, the web-spinner never let up for a second to catch a breath as he uncovered and fought his greatest nemesis, raced against time and all odds to save the life of Aunt May, and ultimately triumphed over his final enemy...his own human weaknesses and fears. Not only was this Lee and Ditko's finest hour, but their character's as well. This kind of pull-out-all-the-stops, fast-paced saga has been imitated by others in **Amazing Spider-Man**—but never equalled. [Not that the last sixteen years are without merit!] The creators had taken their creation, shaped and guided him slowly and believably, and brought Spider-Man to a fitting climax at a crucial crossroads in his life.

The next few issues of **Spider-Man** were nice but not remarkable. For reasons which are not clear to anyone except the gentlemen involved, Lee and Ditko were about to part company. As with many great creative duos in many mediums, the two are opposites in style and temperments. Lee is loud, brash, and a tireless self-promoter [no criticism implied] while Ditko is quiet, serious, and most often lets his work speak for itself. These two very different men, melded together as a unit, produced outstanding work. But not without some friction.

One of the old industry rumors as to why Ditko left Marvel had it that Stan told Steve to draw more like



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Jack Kirby. To 'ape' Kirby was an unwritten Marvel law, and from what I've been told by other artists who have dealt with Lee, he does speak with a bluntness and sometimes tactlessness that can offend and startle certain shy, retiring types. Though it makes for good gossip, I don't think it explains much. Ditko was used to Lee. He could discount his editor's statement and work in his own distinctive style. Such a bald attitude by a co-worker could add fuel to a growing fire.

The other rumor revolves around the who-is-Green-Goblin issue of **Spider-Man** that Ditko and Lee were working on. One story says that Ditko had planned that **Flash Thompson** be revealed as GG! Another had Ned Leeds as the villain who would learn Spidey's secret identity. Whoever Ditko's choice was, Lee disagreed and opted for Norman Osborn as the baddie. Ditko probably objected to a less well-known character, from out of left field, who had not clashed with Parker in his everyday life as had Thompson or Leeds. This was not the sole reason for the split between Lee and Ditko, but it was the straw that broke the artist's back. Unfortunately, unlike in comic books where there are clearcut good guys and bad guys, in real life, when creativity and business mix, there is only human fallibility. **Spider-Man** was only a comic book, so it went on. When #39 appeared on the stands, it featured the artwork of a new/old professional...John Romita.

As much as Ditko laid the foundation of a great character, it was the team of Stan and Johnny that continued the building of Spider-Man as the best of what Marvel was. Peter Parker was now a college man, more urbane and in the social swing. He had some out of the dark Ditko world and had gone from boy wallflower to man about town! Much of this personality growth is reflected in the clean, appealing art of John Romita, who brought his vast experience as a romance artist to a super-hero comic. Peter became more handsome, the girls in the strip became absolutely **beautiful**, and everybody started to dress in the latest fashions. The campus, the disco-teque, the bachelor pad, and the motorcycle became new symbols in Peter's life, though the tried-and-true encounters with J. Jonah Jameson and Aunt May were continued, fresh as these characters still were in the early years.

The first great series Lee and Romita can lay claim to is the Kingpin/Foswell trilogy in #50 - 52. Peter had thrown down his mask while beset by more than his usual share of problems; the Kingpin established himself as the head of the mobs in New York; Frederick Foswell, and old Ditko player who had been a criminal and later reformed, found his moral resolve weakening and returned to crime. Spider-Man returns to his chosen task, only to have to save the life of Jameson, the man who has done him more harm than any three super-villains! In the end, though, it is Foswell who performs heroically to save J.J.'s life. Finding that he cannot live on the wrong side of the law, the hapless reporter 'redeems' himself by sacrificing his own life in defense of the man who had given him a chance when he needed it. Though Spidey took more of a supporting role in the denouement, these stories show us more of Jameson, a character Lee enjoys and finds easy to write, introduced us, without much fanfare, to Robbie Robertson, the Bugle's City Editor, who just happens to be black, take some hoary formula stuff [the hero that wants to quit, the bad guy that turns good at the end] and make it **work**, and show that the team of Lee and Romita could produce some dynamite entertainment!

Amazing Spider-Man #75 was the last really memorable issue produced by Lee/Romita. It was actually part eight of a ten-issue series involving the Kingpin and his wife, an ancient tablet, the Maggia, and Silvermane's acquisition of the formula for eternal youth, which led to a superb climax with the aged Silvermane reverting to childhood and infancy and finally nothingness as the helpless Spider-Man watches in quiet horror. It was a special moment that was disappointingly followed by several flops and misfires. In quick succession we were witness to a rather unnecessary return of the tragic Lizard [who became less sympathetic and more tedious with each 'comeback'], the contrived Prowler, the ludicrous Kangaroo [a second rate parody of a Spidey nemesis], and the Kingpin's son, The Schemer. It was far too soon for the Kingpin to return in any way, shape, or corpulent form. For the first time, it seemed to this veteran fifteen-year-old reader that Stan was running out of ideas, and repeating familiar schticks and regurgitating special villains too often and quickly. Even a young fan has a memory, and certain standards, for his favorite super-hero. Also indicative of this quality downtrend was Romita's less frequent hand in the art. Some issues looked to be by John Buscema and Jim Mooney. Then Romita would be back. Then Gil Kane took over as main spider-artist, though inked by John. Romita would continually return to full pencils and inks, if only for an issue. Growing disgusted with the artistic musical chairs, I ceased to be a regular buyer of **Amazing Spider-Man** for the first time in five years. Consistency and stability were missing from that comic, and would not soon return.

I checked back to see what all the hubbub was about, when in #96 - 98, Lee bucked the Comics Code Authority to run a story wherein Parker's pal Harry Osborn got hooked on **LSD**. I was all for the gesture, but by that time could not stand yet another return by the Green Goblin! How could I know that the worst was yet to come.

Amazing Spider-Man #100 was an anniversary issue that I had looked

forward to, previous disgruntlements aside. Sadly, it was a bloody joke, starting with Peter's additional four arms (!), his involvement with Morbius, The Living Vampire, and the latest and worst excuse for the Lizard to return. Spidey had been around for **one hundred** issues, to come to **this**? When Parker, J.J.J., and Gwen Stacy journeyed to the Savage Land in #103 - 104, I was too stunned and just a little bit too heartbroken to feel any loss. The love affair was over.

I kept looking over the shoulder of my childhood friend and fellow collector. As bad as it had become, he could not yet bring himself to drop **Spider-Man**, his all-time favorite comic. Randy had dropped **Iron Man**, **Daredevil**, and **Sub-Mariner** when a young new writer named Gerry Conway had taken over and wrung all the vitality out of those mags. But he persevered with **Spider-Man**, and we hoped against hope that the character would emerge victorious over the writer. Oh yeah?

Some fans will tell you that **Amazing Spider-Man** #121 and #122 are a highpoint in the series, as Peter's true love, Gwen Stacy, is murdered by the Green Goblin in Part One, and the Goblin buys the farm in the concluding tale. I didn't buy the story then and I like it even less now. The deaths had shock value and, probably very good sales at the time, but not much more. Conway exploited the reader with a cheap melodramatic ploy...when all else fails, kill somebody off. It was like a bad detective novel...before you grow bored, turn the page and find another corpse under the bed. I felt cheated and used by a hack writer who could fill up page after comic page with situation and dialog but was impoverished when it came to original ideas. The only thing worse than Stan Lee repeating himself was Conway repeating Stan's worst efforts. This was the nadir of **Spider-Man**'s long run, and unfortunately, it was just a sign of what the rest of the decade would bring.

It was the era of Marvel expansion, when their lineup of titles went from a dozen to several score, without the requisite addition of capable talent. **Spider-Man** and **Fantastic Four** became like **Mad Magazine** parodies of what these titles had been and meant in the 1960s. Conway continued as Spidey scripter until #149, leaving on a sour note by dropping the awful clone plotline in the hands of Archie Goodwin, who did his best to wrap things up in #150 and then get the hell out of there! Len Wein stepped in to match Gerry's long tenure on the book and actually tried to outdo Conway by substituting multiple Green Goblins for clones in the final Wein opus (#176 - 180). Six miserable years of turgid tedium was over.

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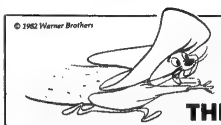
One bright spot during this period was the regularity of penciller Ross Andru. I didn't always like his rendition of Peter Parker and other supporting players, but his storytelling abilities were top-notch. His visions of Spidey in action over the New York skyline made for some of the best action sequences in Spider-Man's history. The strong, stable artistry of Andru would be sorely missed from this title, from when Ross left in 1978 until when John Romita, Jr. became more-or-less the "official" **Spider-Man** artist in the last year.

Marv Wolfman seemed to be the first writer in years to want to get Spidey back on the quality track. He tried to team up with one artist for the most part, and with Keith Pollard, the veteran Marvel writer brought some genuine interest to a tired, abused character who was on his last spidery legs. Although I felt cheated by the fake death of Aunt May and the excesses of J.J. Jameson's mental condition, overall Wolfman and Pollard built up to a truly worthwhile anniversary issue, #200, which really returned Peter Parker to his roots and his powerfully simple **raison d'etre**..."this was the anniversary issue that #100 never was."

Just when it seemed that Wolfman was the right guy to return Spider-Man to his former glory, Marv became the latest in a long line of Marvel scripters to depart for the now greener pastures of an enlightened DC. Marvel's flagship title began to flounder under a dizzying array of writing styles and amateur artwork. Whereas once beginning pencillers would hone their skills and make their mistakes on 5-page backup strips, now they were invited to work out the bugs in the pages of **Amazing Spider-Man**! I firmly believe that all comic books are not created equal and that certain titles deserve the best talent available. Apparently, someone at Marvel agreed with my chauvinistic belief. After some lackluster issues by people who didn't really have a feel for the amazing arachnid, editor Tom DeFalco searched high and low for one pair of creative people who could **commit** themselves to **Amazing Spider-Man** and give this twenty-year-old title their all. If upstarts like **X-Men** and **Daredevil** could get the red carpet treatment, why not the wall crawler?

It is almost too soon to tell, but Roger Stern and John Romita, Jr. have brought a new excitement and interest to Spider-Man with their early work on the title. The reader expects this team to stay together for more than a few issues, allowing them to finish what they start and to give the fans a chance to gauge their abilities. Junior doesn't have his father's background or experience (Senior can draw war, western, romance, and super-hero with equal aplomb!) but the son is growing with talent rapidly, and if he and Stern truly stick with the title, for Spider-Man fans both old and new, it will be worth the wait!



Animated Antics

by Jim Korkis

THE ANIMATED SPIDER-MAN SERIES YOU MAY NEVER GET TO SEE

There are twenty-six animated adventures of Spider-Man that fans may never get an opportunity to see. These episodes were completed over a year ago but no arrangements have been made to release them. Some of those shows feature the best animated version of Spider-Man ever produced; some feature the worst.

Even **Marvel Update**, the in-house p.r. publication of Marvel Productions, is strangely silent about the fate of these shows which seem to have disappeared from the face of the Earth.

There have been several previous attempts at making the web-spinner an animated superstar. Fifteen years ago, Grantray-Lawrence produced fifty-two segments of a Spider-Man series for ABC and its catchy theme song still replays in most fans' memories. This series feature some early directing work by the infamous Ralph Bakshi who had as yet not discovered the wonders of rotoscoping. These episodes still enjoy a healthy life in syndication. Years later, Spidey popped up as a frequent guest star in DePatie-Freleng's **Spider-Woman** series for ABC.

A year or two later, Spider-Man was once again headlining his own show, **Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends**. "Spider-Friends", the official nickname for the show, feature thirteen thrilling adventures of Spider-Man, Iceman, and Firestar. The original concept was to have the trio be composed of Spidey, Iceman and the Human Torch but the network feared that children would try to "flame on" like the Torch by setting themselves on fire. So the Torch was redesigned by Rick Hoberg into the mutant female known as Firestar. Cathy Garver who played Cissy on **Family Affair** is the voice of Firestar. Frank Welker does the voice of Iceman and the Spider-Friends' dogs, Ms. Lion. Aunt May's voice is supplied by June Foray who also does Rocky the Flying Squirrel, Natasha, Witch Hazel, and a host of other famous characters. The story editor for the show, Dennis Marks, is the voice of The Green Goblin, his favorite character.

Artists Larry Houston, Dick Sebast, Will Meugniot, and Rick Hoberg keep this show reasonably consistent with the Marvel Comic Book Mythos. Often times, their storyboards will include xeroxed references from the actual comic books so that the animators can bring the proper Marvel spirit to life. However, even they can't double check everything, which is why last season's appearance of the villain Electro had the evildoer attired in a blue and yellow costume rather than a green and yellow costume.

Spiderfriends is considered only a marginally successful series and the current season will feature only three new episodes. The new episodes will all be origin stories. The Iceman orgin will feature the old X-Men and the Firestar origin will feature the new X-Men as they battle the menace of the Juggernaut. The Spider-Man origin episode, written by Don Glut, will contain a framework story of Spidey battling Videoman, a creation from last season. Last season, Videoman would escape through wall sockets, but the network worried that kids might stick their fingers in sockets in an attempt to find Videomen. This year Videoman is only allowed to exit

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via exposed wires or by cable. For this new season of shows, comic artist Russ Heath was called upon to do character designs, although his work will primarily be visible on the Hulk portion of the new show.

Interestingly, animating these adventures is more exciting to some of the Japanese and Korean animators than to the old DePatie-Freleng staff that forms the core of the Marvel Productions company in Los Angeles. David DePatie, president of the company, stated that it was hard to adjust to the demands of animating superheroes in stories with "a beginning, middle and an end that makes sense. With the Pink Panther we were more interested in fun." This quote comes from an outstanding Group W Children's Special written and directed by Arthur Greenwald and co-produced by KDKA in Pittsburgh and KPIX in San Francisco. Entitled **Spider-Man on the Move**, the half hour special is narrated on camera by Stan Lee who shows how the **Spiderfriends** show is put together from initial idea to completed animation. Convention programmers might consider including this relatively unknown but finely crafted promotion film at future cons.

However, even the special does not mention the new syndicated Spider-Man show that has been ready for over a year and has never been shown. In fact, at the time this article is being written, Marvel Productions does not even have copies of those shows since they had to be shipped elsewhere for special effects and sound work. Art Vitello, perhaps best known for his recent animation work on **Poltergeist**, was the person responsible for directing the majority of the twenty-six syndicated episodes which were originally designed to supplement the Grantray-Lawrence episodes currently in syndication. [Vitello is also the man who layed-out and directed the opening title sequence to the **Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends** show.]

The syndicated series features Spidey with a different voice from the network Spider-Man, which is also the case with the other characters who include the regular comic book cast, such as J. Jonah Jameson and Betty Brant. The only addition was Jameson's nephew who was added in the later episodes as an antagonist for Peter Parker. Once of the early writers for the series had Spidey equipped with a beeper. Whenever Aunt May needed Petey for some urgent reason such as picking up groceries, she would "beep" for him, usually when Spidey was fighting for his life. Wisely, Vitello decided to eliminate that concept. Four or five episodes were made before Vitello was assigned to the project. He was able to edit out some of the trouble spots on these earlier episodes, although they don't reflect the quality work Vitello did afterwards. Before Vitello arrived, crashes occurred off screen and stock shots were rampant. Vitello changed all those unnecessary shortcuts with the help of dedicated artists such as Hank Tucker, Larry Houston, and Rick Hoberg.

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The syndicated series had a Spider-Man origin episode written by Don Glut, the same fellow who did the Spiderfriends' version of Spidey's origin. Interestingly, in the network version, the burglar couldn't be shown with a gun; in this syndicated version the burgler's gun is not only shown but is obviously a threat to Spidey. Entitled "Arsenic and Aunt May", the story was storyboarded by Larry Houston who made sure several poses, especially in the final confrontation, were exact restagings of Steve Ditko's original poses from the comic. In the original script, Spidey spent time watching some nameless superheroes on television. Houston made sure that those nameless heroes became specific heroes: the Might Avengers. [He later sneaked in another TV showing, the X-Men battling the Sentinels.] "If I were a kid, I'd love seeing these cameo things," stated Houston in a recent interview, "it doesn't cost any extra but it makes it a special treat for Marvel fans like myself."

One episode of the series has Spider-Man and Captain America battling the Red Skull. The animation was done in Japan and one animator who has seen the finished version described the special effects such as backlighting, as breathtakingly beautiful. Unfortunately, even Marvel Productions does not seem to have "house copies" of these shows and no one I contacted quite knows where the completed episodes are now, so there is no way of knowing if fans will ever get the chance to see this new animated version of Spider-Man.

I was able to see one pre-Vitello episode entitled "Lizards, Lizards Everywhere" and following is a summary of that episode. Curious fans can semple whet they are missing. The story is about Spidey's battle with the Lizard, however, there is no reference to Dr. Curt Connors nor of Spidey's past relationship to the character. The Lizard is presented as just another standard supervillain. Like most animated superhero shows, the story is merely a series of threats that Spidey must overcome before he finally defeats his foe.

The story opens with Spidey trying to deliver photos to the Daily Bugle; he swings by a billboard promoting a local Hulk TV show. Suddenly, he sees a commotion at the Central Park Zoo. All sorts of reptiles such as snakes and alligators are loose. Spider-Man seves a small child from harm as he quips, "See ya later, alligator.". While the web-slinger is busy saving other folks, the Lizard appears and releases a huge gorilla to attack Spidey. It is never explained why the master of reptiles uses a gorilla. Spidey easily defeats this new menace and the Lizard escapes unnoticed into his hideout beneath the zoo. Spidey has started sneezing and decides to get some cold medicine. Meanwhile, the Lizard has stolen a subway train, derails it [off-camera], and thus blocks one end of a subway tunnel. No explanation is given for this action.

Spider-Man is having no success with his cold. When he went into a drugstore he sneezed so hard he knocked everything off the shelves. He decides to take the subway and,

while on it, he sneezes repeatedly, which annoys a fat old woman with a small boy who chastizes the "disrespectful insect" for not covering his mouth when he sneezed. There is not time for further discussion as the Lizard has stolen the very subwaytrain Spidey is on. Spidey rushes through the train, finds the Lizard and while he is battling his foe, the train crashes and seals off the other end of the subway tunnel. Clouds of mist appear in the tunnel and using "reptilian telepathy", the Lizard fills the now enclosed tunnel with various reptiles and reptile eggs. Were those clouds of mist actually steam? Where did the Lizard get "reptilian telepathy"? Was he trying to turn this portion of the subway into a heated breeding room for his reptile friends? And if so, why use the subway? The writer apparently explained all this in his descriptions in the script but did not give the characters any dialog that explains the action to the viewer, necessitating constantly making educated guesses about the situation. Apparently, this was a common problem with the pre-Vitello episodes.

Soon snakes, lizards, and alligators have Spidey pinned against a wall and Spidey discovers he's out of web fluid. He grabs his refill cartridge, sneezes, and drops the cartridge which spills open and sticks his feet to the floor. Spider-Man is not trapped; he merely slips out of his boots and climbs overhead to get to the Lizard. Boots? When did Spidey start wearing boots? It is just another character inconsistency often made by people not familiar with the comic book version. The Lizard escapes through a crack in the wall and Spidey decides to go see a doctor about his cold. Spidey swings in a straight line across the screen. There is no arc his his swing and his webline is always directly over his head as he moves; it never bends but seems affixed to some magical point always located straight up. Apparently the writer didn't realize that the web has to be attached to something. There is a nice touch in this scene, however. Spidey swings by the Baxter Building on his way to the doctor, demonstrating that somebody knew what was going on. Spidey has to wait in the doctor's waiting room after some repartee with a nurse who thinks Spidey's last name is "Ah-choo!"

The Lizard has been busy; he turns on a weather machine he has built so that all New York will be turned into a swamp. Heat lamps (again unexplained) in the subway hatch hundreds of reptile eggs and, the suddenly fully grown reptiles overrun New York City. "Drive the people from the city," orders the Lizard.

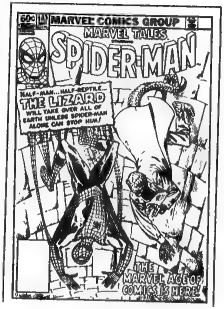
Hearing all the screaming, Spider-Man leaves the doctor's office and rescues folks from the threatening reptiles. He saves a cab driver while explaining to the guy that, "I charge two bucks a mile and only carry five bucks in change."

Even J. Jonah Jameson is not safe from attack. His Daily Bugle office is filled with reptiles and a large snake has entwined itself around the publisher. Spidey swings into the room and J.J. offers to print a full page retraction of all the bad things he's ever said about Spidey if Spidey will save him from the snake. Spidey does and J.J. chortles that he has no intention of keeping his word. Spidey seems unconcerned and swings off, leaving J.J. with an officefull of reptiles, although it is doubtful this is what the writer intended. There seems to be evidence that the writer wanted Spidey to take care of all the reptiles so that J.J. would be comfortable weeseling out of his promise.

Spidey sees the Lizard swinging in a straight line, on a vine, across the city. Spidey grabs hold of the Lizard's tail, which he pulls off and falls amost to his doom. The Lizard's tail instantly grows back as the Lizard laughs.

Spidey decides to use a radio transmitter to jam the Lizard's telepathy and the Lizard sends snakes to stop him. Spidey gets to the transmitter before the snakes. [A scene was filmed that Vitello later cut when he was put in charge. The snakes crawl all over Spidey who then hums a snake charmer's tune and wiggles a little. Naturally, the snakes fall off and slither away.] The transmitter jams the Lizard's telepathy so that the reptiles are easily herded back to the zoo.

"You can't stop the Lizard so easily, Spider-Man! I'll be back!"


MARVEL COMICS GROUP
MARVEL TALES
SPIDER-MAN
HALF-MAN... HALF-REPTILE...
THE LIZARD
WILL TAKE OVER ALL OF EARTH UNLESS SPIDER-MAN ALONE CAN STOP HIM!
THE MARVEL AGE OF COMICS IS HERE!

threatens the Lizard.

The final scene is Spidey once again at the doctor's office. The doctor explains that Spidey doesn't have a cold. He was allergic to reptiles. Then he gives Spidey a fifty dollar bill for his services. "Fifty dollers?! I think I'm going to be sick," moans the man of webs.

There are twenty-five more episodes, and since twenty of them were handled by Vitello, they should be of higher quality both in terms of story and animation than this pre-Vitello example that was available for viewing for this article. Even this animated adventure features some quality animation (specifically a "run" cycle of drawings where Spidey runs through a subway train) and some interesting and consistent attempts at capturing Spidey's wiseguy attitude and the everyday problems that confront Marvel superdoers. If even this poorly constructed episode can have such virtues then the reportedly superior segments fully directed by Vitello must be beyond belief. Freed from network restrictions that forbid direct contact between hero and villain and demand a suitable dog character as a companion, this syndicated series may be the best animated version of Marvel characters that has ever been made. Unfortunately, this series may never be seen and, for Marvel fans and animation fans, that could be a greater tragedy than **Dr. Doom Meets the Pink Panther**.

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COMICS FEATURE

The GOLDEN AGE of COMICS

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COMIC FANDOM'S FORUM

ROCKET'S BLAST COMICOLLECTOR

STRIP TEASE

SUBSTANCE

by Rick Norwood

Comic strips run in so many different formats that it puzzles the collector and frustrates the artist. It is one reason that no new artist with an original creation has had a successful adventure strip in forty years. The syndicates are still banking on Flash Gordon (1934) and Little Orphan Annie (1924). Why should Richard and Wendy Pini, for example, submit **Elfquest** to the preposterous requirements of the syndicates when they can do it themselves and do it right.

Things can change, however, and not only for the worse. Newspaper editors do listen to readers, and if one little old lady who is offended by **BC** can cause the strip to be cancelled in a major newspaper, then ten or a dozen readers of this column can get a paper to carry a strip they want to see or to change from an incomplete format to a complete format on a strip they already carry. But to do that, you have to know what to ask for. If enough people write, the editors will listen. If they don't listen, people are going to get tired of reading strips that are cut, rearranged, censored, watered down, and trampled upon. And when that happens, a whole lot of people are going to stop buying Sunday papers.

In addition to the standard formats: full, half, third, quarter, tab, half tab, and third tab, there are a variety of weird formats: L shaped, quarter page boxes, third page verticals, and more. Some newspapers design their own format. Some papers run the strips comic book size. However, for every current strip that I know of, either the half page or the third page is complete. These are the formats to look for and collect. In some cases the full tab is also complete. In many cases it is not. All other formats are either incomplete or reduced in size or both.

Let's consider two top strips in detail, and then I will give you a brief rundown on the format of each of the most collected titles.

Tarzan has a half page standard. The half page has three lines of story, of which the first line is supposed to be "disposable". The first line has two panels, an illustrated title panel, and a smaller panel. All have beautiful Mike Grell artwork. The **Asbury Park (NJ) Press** runs the complete half page. The tab drops the smaller panel. The third drops the first two panels. The half tab is complete, but too small to display the artwork effectively.

Steve Canyon has a third page standard. The third page has two lines of story, with a title in the first panel. In the half page, every panel is blown up and the bottom of every panel is cropped. Then the panels are rearranged to make three lines of large panels. In the half tab, the enlarged panels are then reduced to a smaller size than they were originally, but still cropped. In the quarter page, the tiny half tab is further rearranged to make two lines of tiny, cropped panels. All of the formats except the third page look just awful.

As a particularly bad example of editorial misuse of a strip, consider the **St. Louis Post Dispatch**. With a perfectly good third page, **Steve Canyon**, available from the syndicate they chose, when they want a third page, to make their own out of a half page by dropping panels from the already cropped strip. What they get is something the same size as a true third, but cropped and missing panels. You can spot these "fake" thirds

PEANUTS
by Charles Schulz
BAM! BAM! BAM!
AGAIN? YOU MUST HAVE GOOD EARS..
I NEVER HEARD A THING
HERE YOU GO..
FOUR? HOW COME YOU'RE TAKING FOUR?
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE WAS CALLED BY A QUARTET OF COOKIES

because there is no title in the first panel.

In addition to the question of format, there are problems with registration and printing. Some papers, notably the **LA Times**, use such poor paper that most collectors will not touch them.

It seems like the only people who really care about comic strips are the readers and the artists. The people who make their living in the industry have made a pretty poor showing. But then, the same could be said of television, automobiles, or any other industry where "management professionals" have taken over from people who know what they are doing.

Even so, if you ask an expert to name the ten top comic artists, chances are that seven out of the ten do comic strips rather than comic books. (Or you may get five strip artists, two comic book artists, and three from the underground or fan press.)

One way to think of it is in terms of buying an artist's time. A comic strip artist usually draws and writes one Sunday page and six daily strips each week. It is, ideally, his personal creation, and he lavishes his entire attention on it. With very few exceptions, the comic book artist is locked into an assembly line, and has no control over scripts, color, his character, or even who inks his work. It is hard to excel under those conditions. Also, a comic book artist who turned out the small quantity a strip artist does would starve. Finally, a comic strip artist has at least a chance of getting rich, a powerful incentive.

Here is a guide to the most collected strips. This will tell you the format to ask for, when you let your voice be heard.

A few things to keep in mind relative to the following checklist. A half tab is usually a reduced half page, and so often does not get a separate comment. A quarter page is the same size as a half tab, but always rearranged and often missing a panel. A third tab is always a reduced third page. These three formats are all so small as to be of little interest to the collector. I will mention those cases where the artwork is simple enough for the half tab to look good.

Notice that almost every strip has some small variation on the standard theme.

Alley Oop (half page complete). Top line the same every week: title panel and panel of characters. Older **Oops** have story material in the top line. Tab drops second panel. Third drops top line. Quarter not seen.

The Amazing Spider-Man (half page complete). Six top lines used in rotation: title panel and background panel. Tab drops second panel. Third drops top line. Quarter drops second panel.

B.C. (half page complete). Top line has title, the same every week, plus a two panel gag, new every week and often funnier than the main gag. Tab and quarter are rearranged but complete. Half tab looks good and is complete. Third drops top line.

Beetle Bailey (half page complete).

Top line has title panel and several panels of story. Tab and quarter drop one panel. Third drops top line.

Bloom County [half page complete]. Top line has title panel and gag panel, different every week. Tab and quarter drop gag panel. Third drops top line.

Buck Rogers [half page complete]. Top line has title panel and one or more story panels. Quarter drops one or more panels. Third drops top line. Grey Morrow uses interesting layouts, which look good in half or third, but very bad in quarter.

Dennis The Menace [half page complete]. Each Sunday page has its own title, e.g. "Time On My Hands". Top line has several panels of story. The middle panel in the middle line is the drop-out panel! (The only other strip that used the middle panel as a discard that I know of was **Pogo**.) Quarter page and tab lose the drop out panel. Third page keeps the drop out panel but loses the top line of the half including the strip title.

Dick Tracy [half page complete]. Top line has title, the same every week, and Rogues' Gallery, similar to the old Crimestoppers Textbook, different every week. Quarter drops "Rogues' Gallery", third drops top line, tab not seen. Half tab looks good to me.

Doonesbury [half page complete]. Top line has title and two panel gag. Tab drops one panel of the gag, rendering it meaningless, while keeping the title panel, which is unadorned and the same every week. Third drops top line. Half tab looks not too bad. At least it is complete, and half pages of this top strip are hard to find [try the **Philadelphia Inquirer**].

Family Circus [all formats complete!] This fine family strip is one strip which uses placement of the title to change the format, giving the artist freedom to use whatever format is best for a given idea.

Flash Gordon [third page complete]. The half page was the only complete format until the half page was discontinued. Last half page: July 9, 1972. The half tab drops the first panel of each line! Only these two formats are offered.

For Better or Worse [half page complete]. Same as **B.C.**

Funky Winkerbean [third page complete]. No half or quarter page. Often run one-sixth of a page, by dropping the top half of the third.

Garfield [half page complete]. Top line has title panel, the same every week, plus a smaller panel, different every week. Tab not seen. Quarter drops smaller panel. Third drops top line.

Gasoline Alley [half page complete]. Top line has title panel plus two panels of story. Tab not seen. Quarter drops one panel. Third drops top line. Half tab does not look too bad.

Hagar The Horrible [half page complete]. Top line has title, which is the same every week. plus two panels of story. Quarter has side title, plus all of the story. Third drops top line. Tab thought to be complete.

Latigo [half page complete]. Top line has illustrated title panel plus smaller panel, both new every week. Quarter complete, but looks bad because of small size. Third drops top line.

Little Orphan Annie [half page complete, tab complete]. Tab looks very good. Quarter complete but looks bad. Third drops top line of half.

Peanuts [half page complete]. Top line has illustrated title plus smaller panel, both new every week. Quarter and tab drop smaller panel. Third drops entire top line.

Prince Valiant [tab and half both complete]. Third has panels trimmed and rearranged, with art added on the side, and looks very bad. No quarter, thank goodness.

Star Trek [half page complete]. Top line has title panel plus smaller panel, often with "fact" text, e.g. "Of the bebebebeque's two pairs of eyes, the lower pair is near-sighted." Tab is complete. Quarter loses smaller panel. Third loses top line.

Star Wars [half page complete]. Usually the top line has a title panel and a "Scrapbook" panel, new every week. [Until about a year ago, the top line began the story.] Al Williamson likes to vary the format, so this is not always the case. The third page drops the top line, usually. The quarter page does various horrible things.

Steve Canyon [third page complete]. The half page is cropped and enlarged, the quarter page is cropped and shrunk. Both look dreadful.

Tarzan [half page complete]. Top line has a title panel, which also begins the story, and a smaller story panel. The tab drops the smaller panel, the third drops the top line. Quarter not seen.

Walt Disney's Treasury of Classic Tales [half page complete]. Top line has title panel plus two story panels. Tab drops title panel, uses top title, leaves story complete. Third drops top line of half. Quarter not seen.

Wizard of Id [half page complete]. Same as **B.C. and...**

Ziggy. The format varies from week to week, which is one reason the strip looks so good.

Next: A comic strip price guide!

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

THE SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

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SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT: The DC Super-Teams of the 1970's

by Murray R. Ward

Like their counterparts at Marvel Comics, the only other producers of super-team comics during the 1970's, DC Comics of that decade boasted a line containing more team titles than ever before or since...but simultaneously, they also followed Marvel in producing very few all-new team comics within that span. Unlike the 40's and the 60's, the so-called Golden and Silver Ages of Comics, respectively, which were seperated by a null period in the 1950's as far as super-hero comics were concerned, the third "Age" in the 70's continued virtually uninterrupted from the earlier epoch, and thus contained many of the same super-hero titles, including, of course, the team comics. For the purpose of this installment, we will first briefly review those super-teams which either continued unabated from the 1960's into the 70's or which were revived after having been cancelled in the 60's; we will then examine the few actual original team concepts of the era.

I. CONTINUATIONS AND REVIVALS

While at Marvel, only the Fantastic Four and the Avengers emerged from the 60's with their own titles intact, at DC, only their flagship super-team, the Justice League of America, lasted any appreciable length of time into the 70's without being dropped, and even the JLA were published bi-monthly for the first time since their early days, while becoming a giant-sized title whose back pages were taken up with reprints. Their consistency maintained through the artwork of Dick Dillin, who drew the title until his death in 1980, the JLA saw their group adventures scribed by many writers, including Len Wein, Steve Englehart, and Gerry Conway (all of whom, curiously enough, turned up as characters in one League adventure) for the most part, while Cary Bates and Elliot Maggin (also to be featured as story characters some issues later), among others, also contributed to the book. As could be expected, each writer added new members to the team, while emphasizing different existing members. Basically, the Justice League continued much as it had in the past.

Of DC's other 60's teams, all were gone or about to be cancelled by the end of the 60's, and almost all were revived at some point during the 70's. Among the non-powered groups, the Challengers of the Unknown, the Blackhawks, and the aides of Rip Hunter, Time Master (in a Challs guest-shot) all reappeared for a time, only to sink from sight once more. The Legion of Super-Heroes had moved from the lead in **Aventure** to the back of **Action** to only occasional status in the back of **Superboy** to oblivion; now they took Superboy's own book away from him for the second time, as **Superboy** gradually became **Superboy and the Legion of Super-Heroes** (first on the cover, then in the indicia), and finally just **Legion of Super-Heroes**, with the Boy of Steel getting a "new" book to himself as compensation. Artists such as Dave Cockrum, who redesigned many of the member's uniforms, and Mike Grell would restore the fan-favorite team to its former glory, and writers such as Paul Levitz would keep it DC's most popular book in terms of fan mail until the 80's brought the third incarnation of the Teen Titans on the scene. The Titans, meanwhile, suffered the same fate as most of the DC groups in the 70's: they were revived for a short while, only to be cancelled again. The self-same route was traveled by the Justice Society (who actually succeeded in bringing back their Golden Age title, **All-Star Comics**, for issues numbered 58 through 74), the Metal Men, the Marvel Family (now DC characters in the **Shazam** title, they lost their book and were reduced to back-up status in **World's Finest**), and even the deceased Doom Patrol (Robotman was found to have survived the deaths of his teammates and briefly joined a trio of new characters in an ill-fated **Showcase** tryout). Most of the overnight comings-and-goings were attributable to two events: in 1976, Gerry Conway became an editor at DC and set out to revive a seeming horde of former DC titles under his editorial auspices, many of them group books; and in 1978, after Conway had left his editor's post, the dreaded DC Implosion struck, as the corporate powers-that-be considered doing away with their comics-producing arm altogether, and succeeded in reducing the DC lineup of titles to a fraction of its former size, a fate it has only bounced back from very recently.

When the dust cleared after that disastrous summer of '78, the JSA were tenants of **Adventure** with a half-dozen others and soon to be dropped into limbo once more (except for the annual JLA/JSA outings), the new DP had lost any hope of their own book and the revived **Showcase** from which they had sprung was also gone, and the Teen Titans, Metal Men, Blackhawks, and Challengers had vanished, with the Titans formally breaking up for the second time while the other teams merely entered cold storage. Even a new non-powered team of characters, the science-fictional Star Hunters, had lost their still-fairly-new title, as had the pseudo-Golden Age teams introduced in Len Wein-scripted **Justice League** stories: the Seven Soldiers of Victory, co-opted somewhat by having one of their number, the Star-Spangled Kid, join the JSA in **All-Star**, never got to fly solo; and the Freedom Fighters, the team composed of former Quality Comics characters (covered in more detail in an earlier installment of this series) also called it quits after only 15 issues.

THE THRILLING RETURN OF

II. NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK (sort of)

There were, however, a few team concepts afloat at DC in the 70's which were not mere revivals of older series. Two of these were part of Jack Kirby's epic Fourth World series; two more were semi-spin-offs of the successful Justice Leage.

The 1970's opened with a bang as Jack Kirby left his long-standing base at Marvel to bring new ideas to fruition at DC. Besides taking over **Jimmy Olsen**—where he reintroduced one of his 40's "kid gang" concepts, the Newsboy Legion, in the form of a supporting cast for the red-haired reporter—he immediately gave birth to the "Fourth World" titles: **Forever People, New Gods,** and **Mr. Miracle**, or to give them their full cover titles: **The Forever People of Supertown, Orion of The New Gods**; and **Mr. Miracle—Super Escape Artist**. Though the books were inter-connected to the extent that both the Forever People and the seemingly mortal Mr. Miracle turned out to be members of Orion's race of New Gods, only the first two titles were ever what could be considered super-team books.

Determined to find parallels between Kirby's Marvel work and his new DC creations, fans pointed out the similarities between Mr. Miracle and Capt. America, between Orion and Thor, and so on. Following this bent, the Forever People were closest to the original X-Men in execution. A quintet of younger "New Gods" adventuring on Earth, they included serious group-leader Mark Moonrider (a Cyclops type), metaphysically-endowed female member Beautiful Dreamer (who shared a romance with Moonrider as Marvel Girl had with Cyclops), jocular and ape-like Big Bear (somewhat like the very early Beast), and Serifan, the team's youngest and least experienced member (a la Iceman). The strict parallelism was broken only by the presence of the straight-laced Vykin the Black in place of the X-Men's spirited Angel—and by the Forever People's patented gimmick. Rather than call upon an adult mentor to get them out of a jam as the early X-Men were wont to rely upon

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Professor X, the RP carried around a Sony Walkman-sized living computer (as did all the other "Fourth World" mainstays) called a "Mother Box". Where Mother Box would allow the fierce Orion to control his bestial other-self and Mr. Miracle to perform his seemingly impossible escapes, she/it had upon the young Forever People the singular effect of merging the five into a single, adult **super**-super-being, the Infinity Man! After a few issues, the formula of RP-are-defeated-but-change-to-Infinity-Man-and-win was abandoned as Darkseid, the main villain of all three Kirby series, used his "Omega Effect" power to change Infinity Man back into the Forever People against their will. Following that, the composite being only showed up once more—in the final issue of the series, just in time to watch his component characters take their final bows.

The **New Gods** was not precisely a team title to begin with, but bore more resemblance to the Asgardian milieu of Marvel's Thor. Orion, the hero of the piece, shared title billing with his cheerful companion, Lightray; the eternal academian known as Metron; the father-figure of New Genesis [home of the New Gods], Izaya, aka High-father; and dozens of supporting character deities. **New Gods became** a super-team book, however, in its second incarnation, also in the 70's.

Both **Forever People** and **New Gods** were cancelled with their respective eleventh issues, leaving only **Mr. Miracle** [after Kirby left **Jimmy Oasn**] to carry on the story of the conflict between the super-civilizations of New Genesis and Apokolips, which the Super Escape Artist declined to do, except in his own final issue, #18, in which Orion and Co. were guests at his wedding. The last we saw of the Forever People, they were marooned on an alien world, albeit a friendly one, seemingly without means of returning; the rest of the Kirby cast, however, were left hanging when their titles died and their creator moved on to **The Demon, Kamandi, Omac**, et al. Following a tryout in the final issue of **First Issue Special**, the interim replecement for **Showcase**, the New Gods regained their title [as did Mr. Miracle] as one of the many revived series from "Conway's Corner". Gerry Conway wrote this one himself, and tried to appeal to a wiser audience by giving some of the aspects of a super-hero team to those New Gods who found themselves defying Darkseid's minions on Earth. To Orion, Lightray, and Metron, he added Forager [a forerunner of the Micronauts' Bug, who had been introduced in the first **New Gods** series], Loner [who had appeared in some background tales of the world of New Genesis, and who was killed off almost as quickly as Thunderbird in Marvel's revived **X-Men** series], and Jezebelle, an unaccountably blue-skinned female with eye-blast powers. For a second time, the series was cancelled with its ongoing plot unresolved, but the story intended to tie up the loose ends eventually saw print in **Adventure** some months later. As with other titles at the time, it was the DC Implosion that wiped out the New Gods [and Mr. Miracle, to boot], but they have since resurfaced as guests in the JLA/JSA epic of 1980.

Speaking of the Justice League, it was DC's foremost super-team that was indirectly responsible for the creation of the remaining two super-group books of the 70's.

Yet another of those titles launched by the company in '76, though not by Conway this time, **Super Friends** was a somewhat tardy tie-in with the then-current TV cartoon series featuring many of the Justice League characters. On the animated show, tailored away from close resemblance to the comic by TV programmers and censors, five of the JLA heroes [or more precisely, four of them plus Robin of the Teen Titans] were, for reasons never explained, saddled with two cartoonity-rendered adolescent helpers, and their bumbling pet, an equally Henne-Barberesque dog. They operated out of a museum-like Hall of Justice headquarters located in the middle of a big city. Although JLA purists would never accept **Super Friends** as taking place in the same universe as the mainstream DC books, writer E. Nelson Bridwell used all his ingenuity to explain the strange changes that had been wrought on the familiar cast. He placed the Hall of Justice in downtown Gotham and dubbed it the HQ of a planned junior crimefighters project run by the JLA members. He explained that Wendy and Marvin, the teen helpers, were candidates for entry into the program who were being trained as crook-catchers by Superman, Batman, Robin, Aquaman, and Wonder Woman. Bridwell even gave the youngsters "real" identities in the established DC Universe, making Wendy the daughter of the detective Harvey Harris from whom a young

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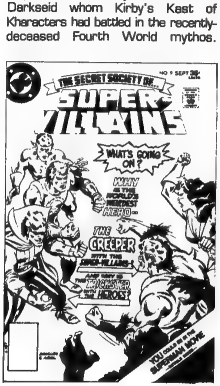
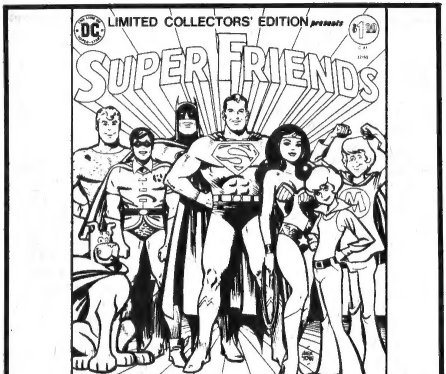
Bruce Wayne learned many of his Batman skills, and Marvin the son of the nurse Diana Prince whose identity Wonder Woman took over as a cover when she first came from Paradise Island. Although the five heroes had been chosen to appear in the cartoon simply because they were DC's most recognizable stars, Bridwell also put it to the readers that these particular characters were the most likely proponents of a training campaign for youngsters, since the Man of Steel had himself been trained by Ma and Pa Kent; Batman owed his abilities to rigorous training and had himself trained Robin; Aquaman had been trained by his father and had in turn taken Aqualad under his wing; and Wonder Woman and her sister Amazons were the living embodiments of the ancient Olympic tradition, continually developing their skills through athletic contests. The book was rendered by Ramona Fradon and Bob Smith somewhat less realistically than the parent JLA book. **Super Friends** had no sooner established its contradictory milieu than the cartoon series was changed to replace Marvin and Wendy with alien teenagers Zan and Jayna (and their monkey, Gleek, of course), who possessed the somewhat Legion-like powers of changing into any liquid and changing into any animal (Beast Boy, look out!). Bridwell was equal to the challenge: he batted out a three-issue continued story guest-starring the entire Justice League, which not only wrote out Marvin and Wendy and brought in Zan and Jayna, but also introduced a virtual batallion of foreign-born super-doers of his own creation. (These "international" super-heroes, now known as the Global Guardians, would solo in back-ups in later issues of **Super Friends**, and form a team of sorts in **DC Comics Presents** in the 1980's.) When the TV powers-that-be declared yet another change in the animated series, causing it to become Challenge of the Super-Friends (note the variant spelling of the comic and television names of the team) and to feature many of the other Justice League characters as well as some totally new heroes (though none of the ones Bridwell had invented for the comic), DC elected to leave the title as it was, probably since to revamp it to fit the new image of the show would make it virtually indistinguishable from the **Justice League** book.

Although general fannish opinion of the **Super Friends** book placed it on the level of Marvel's **Spidey Super Stories**, an Easy Reader version of Spider-Man intended for the audience of TV's Sesame Street, it quickly became an "underground" favorite of many adult fans, who appreciated Bridwell's penchant for bringing back forgotten villains, tying up loose plot-threads, and resolving seeming gaffs in the continuity of the mainstream DCs. It was in **Super Friends** that we learned the correct spelling of Lyle Ler-Rol, Superman's Kryptonian sweetheart from the 60's story "Superman's Return to Krypton", causing her name to conform to that of other Kryptonian females; that the Time Trapper, foe of the Legion of Super-Heroes, and the Time Master, an old Wonder Woman villain, were one and the same; what Prof. Carter Nichols, a semi-regular in the Jack Schiff Batman stories, had been up to all these years; and how the Atlantises of Aquaman and Lori Lemaris, Superman's mermaid friend, could co-exist as city-states of the same underwater nation. **Super Friends** was almost the only title of recent vintage to survive the DC Implosion, due to its relationship to both the popular Justice League and to the cartoon show. Last year the book finally gave up the ghost after 47 issues.

The last of the 70's DC Super-teams was not a super-**hero** book, but one populated by super-**badguys**. Still another of the titles created upon Gerry Conway's ascension to editor and disposed of upon his departure or during the DC Implosion, **Secret Society of Super-Villains** constituted a villainous counterpart to the Justice League, just as **Super Friends** was the JLA's supposed "little-kids" version. The initial logistics of jockeying villains from a dozen different titles into a single book where they would try, with varying degrees of success, to work together to defeat the super-heroes who were their nemesis, proved a bit much for the DC staff. **Secret Society** began with not one, but two origin stories, each featuring a different initial lineup of members. One of these eventually saw print in an issue of the DC company fanzine, **Amazing World of DC Comics**, while the other became the "real" **SSOSV #1.**

To say that the Secret Society was disorganized would be like saying Spider-Man has neuroses. The overloaded roster of the early issues seemed likely to crush the JLA by sheer weight of numbers if only the members could overcome their individual ego problems long enough to initiate a little teamwork; as did such unexpected evildoers as the Wizard, who later sought to remold the group in the form of his own Earth-2 injustice Gang; Copperhead, a one-shot Batman baddie from the pages of **Brave and Bold**; and Hi-Jack, a former member of the Royal Flush Gang now operating alone. Their plans went awry, however (as they had to since the Comics Code expressly forbids villains to win out—a problem the Joker would also face in his own concurrent title), when the creation of the Secret Society was revealed as a ploy of Darkseid—yes, the same Darkseid whom Kirby's Kast of Kharacters had battled in the recently-deceased Fourth World mythos.





Led by a clone of the late hero Manhunter (whom Archie Goodwin and Walt Simonson had chronicled from rebirth to death in an award-winning series in the back of **Detective**), the villains united to overcome a worse villain, thus temporarily putting their vendetta with the Justice League on the shelf.

By the time they returned to fighting heroes, one Captain Comet, late of the 1950's DC science fiction title **Strange Adventures**, had returned to Earth after a lengthy space sojourn to find that: a) he was as much a man out of his time as the newly-thawed Capt. America had been in Marvel's **Avengers**, b) he could no longer tell the heroes from the villains without a scorecard (he had missed a **lot** of comics in 20 years!), and c) he was being duped into fighting on the wrong side by the Secret Society. Understandably irate at this development, Comet resolved to carry on a one-man war against the Super-villains, thus freeing the regular Justice League members (who were quite busy enough in their own books, thank you) to do little more than guest-star, usually one or two at a time, with the Captain and the Secret Society.

Meanwhile, with the Manuhunter-Darkseid plot out of the way, the villains found themselves being taken over by the manic adman, Funky Flashman, from the pages of **Mr. Miracle**. (**Secret Society** was rapidly becoming a home for Old Jack Kirby Characters.) During Flashman's tenure as self-appointed leader, Batman villain Capt. Stingaree, Superman's arch-enemy Luthor, the JLA's sorcerous foe Felix Faust, and another Hawkman baddie, the Matter Master, wandered in and out of the book, and the Creeper and Kid Flash guested while the Trickster, yet another Rogue's Gallery alumnus, tried to figure out what was going on. (By this point, the readers were also confused, and could empathize with Trickster.) Showing Funky the door, Grodd returned to rebuild the team with Poison Ivy, Bizarro, Angle Man, and Sinestro as members. This was perhaps the most successful incarnation, as the Secret Society finally got to do what they were created to do, namely, battle the Justice League, in their one-and-only Annual, in which they faced opposite numbers Flash, Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman, and Green Lantern, as well as the ubiquitous Capt. Comet. The same troupe also appeared in a Wonder Woman-Atom team-up in **Super-Team Family**. With their defeat, the Wizard returned to take over with Star Sapphire, Plant-Master, Blockbuster, and Reverse-Flash on his squad. They tangled with the Captain, became briefly involved with the Earth-3 Crime Syndicate whose members resemble evil versions of the principal JLA members, and warped into Earth-2 to tangle with Wizard's old enemies in the Justice Society.

We readers never got to see how that one came out, though, because **Secret Society**, the comic, threw in the towel after 15 issues at that point. Secret Society, the concept, however, lived on: the Wizard's team escaped Earth-2 and fought the JLA in their own book, actually succeeding in exchanging bodies with the superheroes for a time. And some years later, another Earth-2 villain, the Ultra-Humanite, organized an entirely new Secret Society composed of costumed criminals from both Earths, including the Mist, Signalman, the Monocle, Killer Frost, Brainwave, the Psycho-Pirate, the Reg Doll, Plant-Master, and the Cheetah. In predictable villainous behavior, half the team double-crossed the other half, and the Justice League and Justice Society were able to triumph over both splinter groups.

And then there were none.

After the summer of 1978, with the DC line reduced to about 16 titles, the day of the proliferating super-teams seemed over. Only the Justice League, the Legion, and the Super Friends still had their own books, and the other groups were reduced to guest-shots, meeting Batman in **Brave and Bold**, and being mentioned wistfully in fanzines.

But, as we shall see next issue, in our final [!] installment of Super-Team Spirit, all was not lost...

NEXT ISSUE: The Marvel and DC and Everybody's Super-Teams of the 1980's!

III. MEMBERSHIP

THE FOREVER PEOPLE
Founded: Forever People #1

1. MARK MOONRIDER
2. VYKIN THE BLACK
3. BIG BEAR
4. SERIFAN
5. BEAUTIFUL DREAMER
6. THE INFINITY MAN
   [composite identity of the other five]

THE NEW GODS
Founded: New Gods #1

1. ORION [uses alias O'Ryan]
2. LIGHTRAY [born Sollis]
3. METRON
4. JEZEBELLE
   Joins: New Gods #12
5. FORAGER
   Joins: New Gods #12
6. LONAR
   Joins: New Gods #12
   Dies: New Gods #15
7. MR. MIRACLE [Scott Free]
   First appearance: Mr. Miracle #1
   First appears with New Gods: First Issue Special #13
8. BIG BARDA [Mrs. Scott Free]
   First appearance: Mr. Miracle #4
   First appears with New Gods: First Issue Special #13

THE SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS
Founded: Secret Society of Super-Villains #1

1. CAPTAIN COLD [Len Snart]
2. MIRROR MASTER [Samuel Joseph Scudder]
3. GRODD
4. COPPERHEAD [real name unknown]
5. SINESTRO
6. STAR SAPPHIRE II [real name unknown]
7. CAPTAIN BOOMERANG ["Digger Harkness, aka George Green]
8. WIZARD [W. I. Zard]
9. SHADOW THIEF [Carl Sands]

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10. MANHUNTER II [a clone of Paul Kirk]
11. HI-JACK [formerly Jack of Clubs; real name unknown]
12. FUNKY FLASHMAN
13. CAPTAIN STINGAREE
14. LEX LUTHOR
15. FELIX FAUST
16. MATTER MASTER [Mark Mandrill]
17. TRICKSTER [James Jesse]
18. ANGLE MAN [real name unknown]
19. BIZARRO
20. POISON IVY [Pamela Isley]
21. PLANT-MASTER/FLUORONIC MAN [Jason Woodrue]
22. BLOCKBUSTER [Mark Desmond]
23. REVERSE-FLASH [Eobard Thawne; also known as Professor Zoom]
24. MIST [real name unknown]
25. SIGNALMAN [Phil Cobb]
26. MONOCLE [real name unknown]
27. KILLER FROST [Crystal Frost]
28. BRAINWAVE [Henry King]
29. PSYCHO-PIRATE [Roger Hayden]
30. RAG DOLL [real name unknown]
31. CHEETAH II [Deborah Domaine]
32. ULTRA-HUMANITE

THE SUPER FRIENDS
Founded: Super Friends #1

1. SUPERMAN [Clark Kent; Kal-EL of Krypton] see also JUSTICE LEAGUE; LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES [as Superboy]
2. BATMAN [Bruce Wayne] see also JUSTICE LEAGUE
3. ROBIN [Dick Grayson] see also TEEN TITANS
4. AQUAMAN [Arthur Curry] see also JUSTICE LEAGUE
5. WONDER WOMAN [Diana Prince; Princess Diana of Paradise Island] see also JUSTICE LEAGUE
6. MARVIN WHITE
   Quits: Super Friends #9
7. WENDY HARRIS
   Quits: Super Friends #9
8. WONDER DOG
   Quits: Super Friends #9
9. ZAN
   Joins: Super Friends #7 - 9
10. JAYNA
    Joins: Super Friends #7 - 9
11. GLEEK
    Joins: Super Friends #7 - 9

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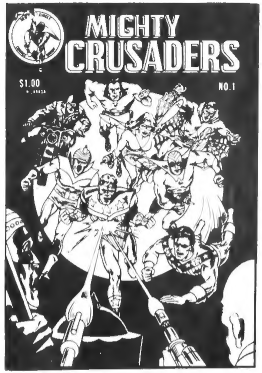

Mighty Crusaders #1

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY
RICH BUCKLER

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